United Nations S/PV.5933

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5933rd meeting

Friday, 11 July 2008, 4.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Angola, Australia, Canada, Liberia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe), Mr. Antonio (Angola) and Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania) took seats at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the Permanent Representative of South Africa, requesting that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Lila H. Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union.

It is so decided.

I invite Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/447, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, France, Italy, Liberia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw members' attention to document S/2008/452, which contains the text of a letter dated 10 July 2008 from the Permanent Observer of the African Union, transmitting the African Union resolution on Zimbabwe.

I shall now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): Let me begin by reiterating the fact that Zimbabwe, a country at peace with itself and its neighbours, poses absolutely no threat to international peace and security and should therefore not be a focus of this Council. In view of that, the situation in Zimbabwe does not warrant the adoption of a Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Zimbabwe has been a victim of incessant meddling through several measures, including declared and undeclared economic sanctions, merely because the Government embarked upon a process of equitable distribution of land after the former colonial Power, under a Labour Party Government, reneged on its responsibilities stipulated in the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979.

Unfortunately, because of the decision we took, the British and their allies have used their media to viciously portray Zimbabwe as a lawless, disorderly and undemocratic country. We have been haunted in all forums, including the Commonwealth, the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly's Third Committee and now the Security Council. The root cause of the crisis, land ownership, is lost in the hype about so-called human rights violations, a subject far easier to sell for propaganda purposes. To us, the ferocity of the anti-Zimbabwe campaign and today's draft resolution underscore what is at stake — our independence and future.

There have been adverse reports on inter-party violence that have been overdramatized in the media to justify the withdrawal of Mr. Tsvangirai from the presidential run-off poll. It is important for the Council also to note that only 10 per cent of the country may have witnessed some form of violence, while 90 per cent of the country has not been affected. The violence that unfortunately took place does not justify the submission of today's draft resolution before the

Council. Let the international community not be gullible about the political machinations of the opposition in Zimbabwe. We would want to assure the Council that the cases of those people who have claimed to be victims of political violence will be investigated by the Government of Zimbabwe. Already, most of the culprits from both parties, including criminal gangs, have appeared before the courts and the law will take its course.

We are, however, astounded by some Western Powers that are pushing to add more sanctions on Zimbabwe following President Mugabe's re-election. Zimbabwe has been under sanctions enshrined in the United States' so-called Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001, which instructs international financial institutions to block aid to Zimbabwe and to deny it debt cancellation. The European Union-imposed sanctions of 2002 have resulted in the economy's underperformance and have brought much suffering to the people of Zimbabwe.

There has been an eight-year blockade of balance-of-payments support and lines of credit, but the world is made to believe that President Mugabe's economic policies have precipitated the economic problems. Recently, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown stated that his Government was working on a new sanctions regime to suffocate the ZANU-PF Government and give birth to an MDC-T Government. In addition, we have heard the European Union and the United Kingdom promising millions to Zimbabwe in the event that a Government of their choice is in place, meaning that the current one is under sanction.

We reiterate that sanctions against Zimbabwe have put the economy under siege and are affecting the vulnerable groups and general population. Many of our people are moving into neighbouring countries and beyond in search of greener pastures. It is surprising that this movement of our people to neighbouring countries in search of economic opportunities due to the impact of sanctions is what this Council is expected to endorse as a threat to international peace and security. That would be the first time that the movement of a people seeking economic opportunities elsewhere is used as a basis for a sanctions resolution under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

By attempting to coerce Zimbabwe into a certain form of behaviour through the force of sanctions and isolation, the West has actually created an aggrieved nation. The current sanctions against Zimbabwe are basically an expression of imperialist conquest and no amount of propaganda or denial can ever wish that away.

Political dialogue is ongoing between the contending parties in Zimbabwe. In fact, in his inauguration statement, President Mugabe reached out to the opposition and said that it was now imperative for the nation to look forward to the future with a sense of unity. He called on all political parties in Zimbabwe to enter into a comprehensive inter-party dialogue sooner rather than later in order to enhance unity and cooperation among Zimbabweans. He emphasized that such dialogue was important in resolving the socio-economic and political challenges currently prevailing in Zimbabwe. The President emphasized that the country has to move forward in unity, regardless of diverse political affiliations, united by a sense of common vision and destiny for a prosperous Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe fully welcomes the recent African Union resolution and would like to assure members that the people of Zimbabwe are willing to engage one another in an effort to resolve their problems. It is important to remember that reconciliation is not a new concept to Zimbabwe. When Zimbabwe obtained its independence in 1980, it was faced with a situation in which it had to mould a nation out of two liberation movements and the forces of Ian Smith's regime. As the Council is well aware, it performed the task extremely well and confounded many prophets of doom. In view of that, we are confident that, with the support of our neighbours, we will once again succeed in reconciling Zimbabweans.

In line with his mandate from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and supported by the African Union, President Mbeki was in Zimbabwe over the weekend to consult with President Mugabe and the political parties in order to chart the way forward on the current situation in the country. We are of the view that any other separate initiatives on that matter would be counterproductive and serve to undermine the role of SADC and President Mbeki.

In view of the aforementioned, today's draft resolution is a clear abuse of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter as it seeks to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe under the pretext that the country is now a threat to international peace and security simply because the elections held did not yield a result favourable to the United Kingdom and its allies. Adopting the draft resolution would set a dangerous precedent and only serve to undermine the ongoing dialogue between the political parties, risk worsening the political and socio-economic situation in the country and affect other countries in the region.

Furthermore, it is, in our opinion, not the role of the Security Council to certify national elections of Member States, all the more so where they do not produce an outright winner. Zimbabweans have a right to choose their own leaders.

It is also important to point out that the seven African leaders who attended the G8 summit stated that sanctions were not the way forward to resolve the political impasse in the country. They expressed the view that Zimbabwe is not a threat to regional peace and security, and therefore the Security Council should yield to the mediation efforts of both SADC and the African Union. It follows therefore that the adoption of the draft resolution would be in disregard of Africa's own position.

Trying to impose a solution from outside would be unfair to Zimbabweans, to SADC and to the African Union. Zimbabwe's problems can be solved by Africans working together. It is our fervent hope that members of the Council will not support the draft resolution, which seeks to involve the Security Council in a purely bilateral dispute between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Earlier this morning, a joint media statement by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) facilitator, the representative of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was issued in Pretoria. The statement reads:

> "The talks between the Zimbabwean political parties consisting of ZANU-PF, MDC-Tsvangirai and MDC-Mutambara, chaired by the Government of South Africa as mandated by SADC, resumed in South Africa yesterday. The talks are aimed at finding solutions to the challenges in Zimbabwe."

As we meet this afternoon, the talks are continuing in South Africa as the Zimbabwe parties continue to seek a political solution to the challenges they face, complicated by the holding of an election that was preceded by violence and political intimidation that resulted in a process that was unfair and declared to be not transparent by the observers from SADC, the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament.

South Africa was appointed as facilitator at the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of SADC, chaired by the Chairperson of the SADC the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania on 28 and 29 March 2007. At that time, the Extraordinary Summit of SADC appealed for the lifting of all forms of sanctions against Zimbabwe.

The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, meeting in its eleventh ordinary session held from 30 June to 1 July 2008 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, expressed deep concern about the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe. However, when considering the matter of Zimbabwe, the African Union summit did not call for sanctions against that country. Instead, the African Union summit "appealed to States and all parties concerned to refrain from any action that may negatively impact on the climate for dialogue".

The summit also decided

> "to encourage President Robert Mugabe and the leader of the MDC party, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, to honour their commitments to initiate dialogue with a view to promoting peace, stability, democracy and reconciliation of the Zimbabwe people".

The summit further

> "expressed its appreciation to SADC, and its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, as well as the facilitator of the intra-Zimbabwe dialogue, His Excellency Thabo

> Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and His Excellency Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, for the ongoing work aimed at reconciling the political parties".

Accordingly, South Africa, as a member of both SADC and the African Union, is obliged to follow the decision of those regional bodies. For that reason, my delegation will vote against the draft resolution before us.

Nonetheless, we are encouraged by the commitment to dialogue by the Zimbabwe parties. That dialogue will lead to the improvement of the humanitarian and economic situation, thereby contributing to a better life for all Zimbabweans. The Security Council must give space for the African Union summit decision to be implemented.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Libya has been following very attentively and with great interest the devastating situation in Zimbabwe over the past few months. We are concerned about the ongoing tension between the Government and the opposition.

Through the African Union and in cooperation with its member States, we shall continue to endeavour to defuse the crisis in keeping with the decisions taken by the Union during its recently held eleventh summit at Sharm el-Sheikh.

As the Council is aware, the summit considered all aspects of the situation in Zimbabwe and recognized its complex nature. It also expressed its concern about the situation, as well as its appreciation for the efforts of South African President Mbeki and Mr. Jean Ping of the African Union to promote reconciliation between the political actors in Zimbabwe. The summit adopted a decision expressing the wish that Zimbabwe should resume dialogue and form a Government of national unity. We note that dialogue is now taking place under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), represented by President Thabo Mbeki. We are pleased to note that the Zimbabwean parties resumed dialogue yesterday.

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the African Union decided to support the efforts of SADC and called for them to continue in order to help the people and leaders of Zimbabwe to resolve their problems. In that regard, the African Union has appealed to the parties concerned to avoid any action likely to have a negative impact on the climate of dialogue. The African Union has confirmed that the people of Zimbabwe are capable of resolving their problems if they are given the joint support of SADC, the African Union and the international community at large.

SADC and the African Union are supporting the people of Zimbabwe as they strive to preserve their territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, the draft resolution before us today does not serve those objectives. It is in conflict with Article 52 of the Charter of the United Nations, which pertains to regional arrangements, and specifically with paragraph 3 of that Article, which states that

> "[t]he Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the States concerned or by reference from the Security Council."

The draft resolution before the Council is based on the assumption that the situation in Zimbabwe poses a threat to peace and security in the region. That assumption is undermined by the fact that the dispute is between Zimbabwean parties and that neighbouring countries affirm that the situation is in no way a threat to regional peace and security. That is why the situation in Zimbabwe does not fall within the purview of the Security Council's mandate. The draft resolution before us also constitutes a violation of Zimbabwe's sovereignty and interference in its internal affairs. That fact is underscored by the first paragraph of the draft resolution, which deliberately omits any reference to Zimbabwe's sovereignty. Security Council resolutions have always reaffirmed the Council's adherence to the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

Imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe would hinder African efforts to resolve the crisis in the country through SADC. Sanctions would have serious consequences for the people of Zimbabwe and create a climate of tension that would in no way be conducive to finding a solution to the problem. Imposing sanctions now would be contrary to the international consensus that sanctions are a last resort to be used when all other means have been exhausted. That is especially relevant given that there is no justification whatever for imposing sanctions. We fear that one of the parties may regard the draft resolution as tacit support for it, which could embolden that party to increase its demands and to refuse to enter into or to continue dialogue to resolve the situation.

Libya, whose leadership has always worked to strengthen the African Union and has continuously endeavoured to resolve African conflicts in the context of African good offices, cannot endorse the draft resolution before the Council and will vote against it.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): History, and in particular Africa's history, has accustomed us to situations in which a small spark has led to a great conflagration. History also teaches us that the most absurd and atrocious of wars are often born of events that we thought were easy to control. Let us therefore not deceive ourselves. We must consider the situation in Zimbabwe as a serious one. Whatever one may say, the worsening of the political and security situation in the country continues to be a potential danger and threat to peace in southern Africa.

The second round of presidential elections that took place on 27 June 2008 was marked by acts of intimidation and violence, thereby compromising the honesty of the balloting and the standing of democracy in both Zimbabwe and Africa. According to the 29 June 2008 statements by the Observer Missions of the Southern Africa Development Community, the Pan-African Parliament and the African Union, that election was not fair, free or credible and thus did not reflect the will of the Zimbabwean people.

The African Union, in keeping with its Constitutive Act, on 1 July 2008 expressed its concern about the loss of human lives and the ongoing violence in Zimbabwe. In order to prevent the conflict from spreading to the whole of the subregion and to foster a climate favourable to democracy, the African Union encouraged the Zimbabwean leaders to engage in dialogue so as to promote peace, stability, democracy and national reconciliation. As a member of the great African family, and faithful to its commitment to peace, Burkina Faso of course endorses that initiative.

However, Burkina Faso is also a member of the Security Council, and in that capacity it must shoulder its responsibilities regarding any situation that it regards as posing a threat to international peace and security. That is why, keeping in mind that the provisions of the draft resolution providing for an embargo on arms imports are designed to prevent a large-scale military conflict, Burkina Faso has decided to lend its support to the draft resolution. I would state clearly, that it is that provision of the draft resolution in particular that essentially explains our position.

We are also convinced that the adoption of the draft resolution would neither compromise nor undermine any moves under way at this stage to bring about a fair settlement to the crisis. On the contrary, we believe that, as a means of exerting pressure, it could help to encourage the Zimbabwean parties to agree as quickly as possible on a consensus political settlement.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Indonesia has been following the developments in Zimbabwe closely, and we wish to underline the significance of the negative reports of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament observers on the presidential run-off election held on 27 June 2008. Clearly, the conduct of elections has to be undertaken in a free and fair manner. We have been appalled by the political violence, intimidation and the loss of life that has occurred. We have also been concerned by reports of the prevailing dire humanitarian situation.

It is our hope that the people of Zimbabwe will be able to resolve the difficult situation they face in a peaceful and democratic manner and in accordance with Zimbabwe's own constitutional processes. The leaders of the country, in particular, are called upon to recognize the burden of responsibility on their shoulders and to leave no stone unturned in the quest to extricate Zimbabwe from its present predicament.

The people of Zimbabwe deserve international support in that endeavour. Indonesia wishes to acknowledge and reaffirm its support for the pivotal role being played in promoting political reconciliation among the political parties by SADC, by the facilitator of the intra-Zimbabwe dialogue, His Excellency Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, and by the African Union. Indeed, the recent African Union summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, was unequivocal in its support for dialogue and reconciliation. We commend also the continued mediation efforts by the Secretary-General.

The Security Council, in synergy with such regional efforts, must also support the people of Zimbabwe in tackling the challenges before them. The promotion of peace, stability, reconciliation and democracy should guide our endeavours. In that, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of the Council working together with SADC and the African Union.

We wish also to emphasize the need for Council unity and a sense of common purpose in addressing this issue. The Security Council has proved able to speak with one voice through its presidential statement of 23 June 2008 (S/PRST/2008/23). It is preferable from our point of view that all Council decisions on the matter should be placed in the same spirit. That we must nurture and sustain.

We therefore deeply regret that the time allocated to discussing the draft resolution has not been sufficient and that flexibility has not yet been fully exercised enabling all members of the Council to fully engage in trying to reach a compromise on this matter.

In our view, any Security Council action must pass two key tests. First, it must serve to promote dialogue and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. In other words, it must provide encouragement and incentives to the political leaders of the country to set aside their differences and place the interests of the nation above anything else. Secondly, it must be in synergy with, and build on, regional efforts to address the issue.

In short, the Security Council must exert a positive influence. It should contribute to establishing sufficient space and the necessary conducive atmosphere to allow dialogue to take place and to succeed. Its members are required to diligently ensure that the measures the Council is contemplating would, in fact, promote solutions. At this juncture, my delegation has doubts whether the measures contained in the draft resolution would promote dialogue among the parties concerned.

In that regard, we are of the view that applying sanctions at this particular stage will not encourage all parties to the conflict to promote dialogue among themselves. Invoking sanctions will also jeopardize ongoing mediation efforts by regional organizations and neighbouring countries.

For those pertinent reasons my delegation will abstain in the vote on the draft resolution. In doing so, our delegation is also looking to the future, for there is a need to maintain the prospect of a united Security Council in addressing this matter in synergy with the regional efforts.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Viet Nam.

Viet Nam shares the deep concern about the current instability, violence and political impasse in Zimbabwe, which are having an adverse impact on the lives of the people of Zimbabwe. We support the mediation efforts by the African Union (AU), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and South African President Thabo Mbeki in implementation of the resolution adopted recently at the AU summit in Sharm el-Sheik, with a view to enabling the parties concerned in Zimbabwe to reach a mutually acceptable solution in the spirit of putting the interests of the people of Zimbabwe above all, thereby contributing to the restoration and consolidation of peace, security and stability not only in Zimbabwe but also throughout the region. We are pleased to note that with the good offices led by South African President Thabo Mbeki, the parties concerned in Zimbabwe are engaging in dialogue and negotiations towards that end.

While sharing the concerns about the current situation in Zimbabwe, Viet Nam is of the view that the situation prevailing there does not constitute a threat to regional or international peace and security. That view is shared not only by regional countries, especially the neighbours of Zimbabwe, but also by a great majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

Therefore, Viet Nam holds that the situation in Zimbabwe at present is not within the mandated purview of the Security Council. Moreover, subjecting Zimbabwe to Chapter VII sanctions for the present situation is of serious concern, because the proposed sanction measures not only would fail to facilitate efforts to find a solution to the situation in Zimbabwe, especially those made by the AU and SADC, but also would set a dangerous precedent for intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States and would run counter to the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. For those reasons, Viet Nam cannot support the draft resolution.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2008/447.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Italy, Panama, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Russian Federation, South Africa, Viet Nam

Abstaining:

Indonesia

The President: The result of the voting is as follows: 9 votes in favour, 5 against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has not been adopted owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Deputy Secretary-General Migiro told the Security Council three days ago (see S/PV.5929) that the situation in Zimbabwe was a challenge to the world, and today the Security Council has failed to rise to that challenge. Ms. Migiro said that this was a moment of truth for democracy in Africa. The Security Council has failed to shoulder its responsibility to do what it can to prevent a national tragedy deepening and spreading its effects across Southern Africa.

I would like to be very clear about the draft resolution we have just voted on, a draft resolution sponsored by a range of countries, including African countries. It has been widely misrepresented by some members of the Council and by the representative of Zimbabwe just now. This draft resolution did not represent a new judgement by the Security Council on the recent elections in Zimbabwe. The Council unanimously made that judgement on 23 June through its presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/23). Our collective assessment was that free and fair elections were impossible under the prevailing conditions of a campaign of violence against the political opposition and the denial of the opposition's right to campaign freely. Regrettably, that proved to be the case when President Mugabe went ahead anyway. Local and regional observers, and many African leaders, made clear that the outcome was not free and fair and could not be considered legitimate. We also agreed on 23 June that the results of the 29 March elections must be respected.

Secondly, the draft resolution was not an attempt to undermine ongoing mediations efforts; precisely the opposite. The draft resolution would have required the Government of Zimbabwe to engage with those efforts, and it would have put some countervailing pressure on the ruling regime to balance the appalling pressure and intimidation that they continue to exert on the political opposition. We have supported President Mbeki's mediation efforts, but we have to be realistic: those efforts have so far come to naught. The only one who has benefited to date is Mr. Mugabe.

Thirdly, this draft resolution was not a foray into the internal affairs of an African country. The Security Council has often determined — for example, in Sierra Leone, Sudan and Somalia — that political instability and violence in one country has consequences for wider peace and stability, requiring the Council to act. That remains true in Zimbabwe today. The African Union has already acknowledged, in its resolution of 1 July, the risk that the conflict in Zimbabwe may spread across the subregion.

We should reflect on the opportunities we have lost today.

We have missed the opportunity to impose a legal obligation on Mr. Mugabe's Government to end the violence and intimidation which have scarred Zimbabwe and made normal politics impossible and which are destabilizing the region. The millions of refugees — a quarter of Zimbabwe's population — constitute a stark demonstration of this.

We have missed the opportunity to strengthen the mediation efforts, giving them the full weight of the international community by the addition of a United Nations envoy. We look to the Secretary-General to appoint such an envoy anyway, on his own authority.

We have missed the opportunity to back up South Africa's mediation efforts with something more than words. That is why the draft resolution included carefully targeted sanctions aimed at those who have brought about the current crisis, with a clear message that they would be lifted once an inclusive political settlement is reached.

And finally, we have lost an opportunity to impose an arms embargo. The last thing Zimbabwe needs now is more arms. We hope that Government and civil society in Southern Africa will continue to ensure that arms do not get through to the Mugabe Government.

This draft resolution only failed because it has been vetoed by the Russian Federation and China. Russia's action is, frankly, inexplicable. Only three days ago, the meeting of Group of Eight leaders, which of course includes President Medvedev of Russia, adopted a statement on Zimbabwe that recommended the appointment of a United Nations special envoy and went on to say, "We will take further steps, inter alia introducing financial and other measures against those individuals responsible for violence".

The draft resolution that Russia and China have just vetoed was precisely to implement those two decisions. We view their decision as deeply damaging to the long-term interests of Zimbabwe's people. It has in our view harmed the prospects for bringing to an early end the violence and the oppression in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe faces not only a political crisis. It also faces a grave humanitarian crisis for which the Government of Zimbabwe bears full responsibility. The Zimbabwean authorities have ignored every single appeal for the restrictions on humanitarian supplies to be lifted. Again, the Council failed today by vetoing this draft resolution to require Mr. Mugabe's Government to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered.

Many times during our discussions of this issue, Council members have said that the people of Zimbabwe must be allowed to find their own way forward. Of course, they must; that is what they tried to do when they voted on 29 March. We must respect the outcome of the elections on that day. If we are not to see more violence, more economic chaos, more refugees and a greater threat to regional peace and stability, then we, the international community, have to do what we can to create the conditions for a real political process that some chance of success. At present, such a process does not exist.

With the vetoing of this draft resolution, we now need to look for a new way forward. We will discuss this with our partners in Europe and with our friends in the African Union and across the world. The people of Zimbabwe need to be given hope that there is an end in sight to their suffering. The Security Council today has failed to offer them that hope.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish first of all to respond to the irresponsible and factually inaccurate statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, who took it upon himself to interpret the Russian position with reference to a decision of the Group of Eight (G-8). I would recall something that anyone who read that decision should know: not coincidentally, it makes no reference to the actions of the Security Council. The Russian Federation based its action on today's draft resolution precisely on the position formulated by the G-8, and of which every member of that group should be perfectly aware.

I should now like to set out the reasoning behind our vote on the draft text that was before us today. The result of the vote on that draft resolution, on sanctions against Zimbabwe, was largely predictable and was due to a number of circumstances. In the positions of a number of Council members, we have of late seen an increasingly obvious attempt to take the Council beyond its Charter prerogatives and beyond the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe such practices to be illegitimate and dangerous and apt to lead to a realignment of the entire United Nations system. The Russian Federation intends to continue to counter such trends, so that all States without exception will firmly comply with the Charter of the Organization.

We are firmly convinced that the problems of Zimbabwe cannot be resolved by artificially elevating them to the level of a threat to international peace and security. The Council's application in this instance of enforcement measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter is unjustified and excessive. Moreover, the draft resolution represents nothing but an attempt by the Council to interfere in the internal affairs of States, contrary to the Charter.

The draft ignores important realities. The negotiating process in Zimbabwe has begun; dialogue has been launched between the representatives of the Government and the opposition and is proceeding apace. In that context, a broad range of problems in the inter-Zimbabwean settlement, including the formation of a Government of national unity, is under consideration. In that respect, we note the mediation efforts of President Mbeki of South Africa and President Santos of Angola, which are opening a window for realistic opportunities to overcome the internal conflict in Zimbabwe.

The sponsors of the draft resolution have not considered the opinions of the States of the region, which reject its sanctions philosophy and are calling for the search for a political solution to be continued. Indeed, the draft ignores the consensual decision of the African Union appealing to States to refrain from any act that could have a negative impact on advancing the dialogue between the Zimbabwean parties. The adoption of a resolution could lead to a realignment of the regional situation and deepen existing problems. That is why the sponsors have been warned against such action by countries of the region that are involved in the search for a solution to the inter-Zimbabwean conflict.

On the basis of all those factors, the Russian Federation voted against the draft resolution.

In ignoring the voices of the skeptical and those who disagree with them, the sponsors unfortunately squandered a genuine opportunity to coordinate a Council response to events in Zimbabwe that would truly have promoted the success of the political dialogue in a country friendly to Russia and, subsequently, a way out of the current profound crisis.

However, the fact that the draft resolution was not adopted hardly means that the grave situation in Zimbabwe is beyond the purview of international attention. The Russian Federation calls on the authorities of that country and the opposition to pursue constructive dialogue in order to develop a formula for a political settlement as soon as possible. Harare must understand that there is no alternative.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): On 23 June, the Security Council determined here in this Chamber that conditions had not been established for fair and free elections in Zimbabwe on 27 June and condemned the campaign of violence launched against the opposition. That Government decided to ignore the appeals of the international community. International observers deployed by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Pan-African Parliament and the African Union confirmed that the vote was neither just nor equitable. Indeed, we saw a parody of an election and a denial of democracy.

Political violence continues in Zimbabwe. Today, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicated that a growing number of refugees have had to flee their country, bearing the scars of beatings and even of torture.

We must act to end that situation, which, as the Secretary-General noted, threatens to destabilize all of southern Africa. France fully supports the efforts of the African Union, SADC and, in particular, Jean Ping and President Mbeki to help the Zimbabweans to find a fair and lasting solution to the crisis. The European Union has indicated that any formula would be acceptable that respects the will of the people of Zimbabwe as expressed in the elections of 29 March, in which Mr. Tsvangirai and his party prevailed.

We believe that the United Nations and the African Union have an important role to play, but if genuine political dialogue to end the crisis is to begin, pressure is also necessary in order to protect the people and to hold those who are blocking the current political process accountable. That is why France and other States members of the European Union have endorsed the need to adopt a reversible sanctions regime targeting those who have perpetrated violence and providing for an arms embargo. France therefore co-sponsored the draft resolution submitted by the United States to that end.

France notes that the European Union is considering intensifying the sanctions measures it already has in place. Furthermore, the communiqué issued by the most recent summit of the heads of State and Government of the G8 referred explicitly to additional phases and actions, including financial measures.

We note that the draft resolution received nine votes in favour from Council members. We note that it was not adopted; each member assumed its responsibilities. What is important now is to ensure the victory of freedom and democracy in Zimbabwe to which the people of that country are entitled after so many years of misery and suffering.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of the draft resolution because we feel that the situation prevailing in Zimbabwe since March, fundamentally as concerns respect for the will of the people, represents a threat to international peace and security and obliges the Council to respond and act accordingly.

In recent months, Costa Rica has stressed the importance of the role of regional organizations and its hope that the crisis in Zimbabwe could be resolved satisfactorily through such channels. The alarming humanitarian situation, the levels of violence and intimidation — which, far from decreasing, are on the rise — the dangerous implications for the region and the unwillingness of Robert Mugabe's Government to respect the views of this Council, the international community and the will of its own people led us to support the draft resolution.

In our view, free and fair elections are essential to protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law. States have an obligation to secure the necessary means to facilitate full and effective participation in their electoral processes. However, in spite of the appeals of the international community and this Council, the Government of Mr. Mugabe decided to proceed with the elections on 27 June, which failed to meet even the most minimal requirements to be considered free and fair. That is the view of such regional bodies as the Southern Africa Development Community that were present as observers to the so-called elections of 27 June. They concluded that, given the circumstances and conditions in which the voting took place, the official results did not reflect the will of the Zimbabwean people. That is why many Governments throughout the world, including those of Zimbabwe's neighbours, do not recognize the validity of the elections or the legitimacy of the Government of Mr. Mugabe.

Costa Rica believes that the demand conveyed by the Security Council to the Government of Zimbabwe in the draft resolution that has been rejected that it fulfil its obligations towards the inhabitants of the country should be backed up by tangible measures. That is why we voted in favour of the imposition of sanctions, as proposed in the draft resolution.

However, as we have stated on various occasions, this Council should be especially disciplined with respect to the imposition of sanctions and should therefore consider and apply fair procedures and clear parametres when it implements them. That would facilitate their better implementation and result in their greater efficacy. We were therefore pleased that certain changes were incorporated into the draft resolution by the sponsors, as requested by my country, notably in paragraph 7 and concerning in particular the setting of a start-up date.

However, although our country understands the reasons for setting the start-up date at May 2005, we would have preferred that the draft resolution provide for the implementation of sanctions to be limited to the specific events dating from March of this year. We say that essentially for two reasons.

First, by limiting the sanctions in that manner it would have added clarity to the parametres used to establish sanctions. Secondly, however, and even more importantly, such an approach would have identified much more clearly the strongest motivation for the action of this Council, which is, from the point of view of our country, the lack of respect for the popular will expressed in the elections.

Another point that Costa Rica wishes to highlight is the importance of operative paragraph 12 in the draft resolution, in which the Council clearly stated that it would consider the measures imposed "if ... an inclusive political settlement is agreed, which respects the will of the Zimbabwean people and the results of the 29 March 2008 elections" (*S/2008/447, para. 12*). Those words are significant because, in our view, they make it clear that the sanctions would be coercive and not punitive measures. It is our hope that individuals listed in the annex to the draft resolution will heed the will of this Council, the international community and their own people as early as possible and engage in serious, substantial and inclusive negotiations in order to achieve a political agreement that respects the popular will, even in the knowledge that the draft resolution has not been adopted.

There can be no doubt that the violations of other human rights that are taking place in Zimbabwe are serious and that the perpetrators should be brought to justice in order to establish their responsibility. In that regard, we particularly welcome the inclusion in the draft resolution of language concerning the need to fix responsibility for human rights abuses. The distinctive nature of the Zimbabwean case is — let us be very clear — that there has been a total lack of respect for the will of an entire people expressed in free and fair elections.

In article 21 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations recognized the principle that

> "[t]he will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures".

That principle has been developed in numerous resolutions of the most democratic body of this Organization, the General Assembly. Those include resolution 45/150 of 1990 and, most recently, resolution 62/150, adopted by an overwhelming majority of 182 votes in favour, including all the members of this Council, with no votes against and only two abstentions.

Further, this Council, very early in its consideration of the situation of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and precisely also in the case of Rhodesia, the Zimbabwe of apartheid, recognized the importance for international peace and security that States should be organized in keeping with the rule of consultation, respecting the will of majorities as well as the rights of minorities. Since 1993, with the case of Somalia, the positive references to democratic governance on the part of this Council have been oft repeated. In that regard, perhaps the clearest cases in which the Council has considered the lack or the breakdown of democracy as an element justifying its actions, even under Chapter VII of the Charter, have been those of Haiti and Sierra Leone, in its resolutions 841 (1993), 940 (1994) and 1132 (1997), inter alia.

Now, given the particular characteristics of this case vis-à-vis the others that I have mentioned, Costa Rica believes that with this draft resolution the Council would been undertaking something new and in some ways would establishing a precedent. Costa Rica sees in it the intention to strengthen democracies.

Finally, we regret the fact that the draft resolution has been vetoed, but we welcome the fact that we have had an explanation from those who exercised the veto — something that we insisted upon. We certainly hope that democracy will return soon to Zimbabwe and that there will be an improvement in the human rights situation and the general situation in humanitarian terms of the citizens of that country.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): Croatia is a sponsor of the draft resolution that a majority of delegations just a few minutes ago clearly voted in favour of. We deeply regret the fact that the Council, due to vetoes, fell short of its mandate by failing to adopt the draft resolution on sanctions today.

We firmly believe that the Council's action would have been timely and has been long awaited, not only because the situation in Zimbabwe is a clear-cut case for applying the concept of conflict prevent, but also because the deep crisis and continuous worsening of the political, social, economic and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe represents a threat to regional peace and security, and thus to international peace and security.

Having said that, I would merely affirm that the measures foreseen in the draft resolution were never aimed at the people of Zimbabwe; on the contrary, they targeted those who prevent them from expressing their own free will and who use violence, fear and intimidation against their own people to achieve electoral goals by force.

Furthermore, those measures provided for by the draft resolution were envisaged as an incentive to dialogue and national reconciliation. They would have been instrumental in applying long-needed pressure on Mr. Mugabe and the ruling clique by sending them a clear message that the international community cannot tolerate violence, double standards and the distortion of democracy at the expense of the Zimbabwean people.

My delegation firmly believes that sanctions would have contributed to the overall stabilization of the situation in the country and the region and would have ultimately led Zimbabwe to the path of true democracy and prosperity.

Finally, once again, we deplore the results of today's vote and the failure of the Council to adopt the resolution.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation has insurmountable difficulties with the draft resolution and therefore voted against it.

Since the March elections in Zimbabwe caused a political dispute, China has closely followed the evolution of the situation in the country. We call upon all parties in Zimbabwe to take to heart the overall interests of the nation, keep calm and exercise restraint, and settle their differences in accordance with the law and through dialogue and consultation. We support the active good offices efforts of the international community, including those of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The recent African Union summit held serious discussions on the question of Zimbabwe and adopted a resolution calling upon all parties in the country to start a dialogue, seek to establish a Government of national unity and support SADC's ongoing good offices on the question of Zimbabwe. It also called upon all parties to exercise restraint and not to take any action that might have a negative impact on the situation. China believes that the African Union resolution on the question of Zimbabwe represents an important position that reflects the consensus of African countries on the current situation. The Security Council should accord it great attention and full respect.

In talks at the recently held G8 summit in Hokkaido, Japan, several African leaders once again clearly stated their opposition to imposing sanctions against Zimbabwe at this stage. In recent days, during the Security Council's consultations on the situation in Zimbabwe, many countries, including China, repeatedly called upon the Council to respect the position of African countries on that issue and to allow more time for the good offices and mediation efforts of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. Regrettably, the sincere appeals and reasonable proposals of those countries were not taken on board. China deeply regrets that.

China has always believed that negotiation and dialogue are the best approach to solving problems on the international level. Lightly using or threatening to use sanctions is not conducive to solving problems. More important, the development of the situation in Zimbabwe to date has not gone beyond the realm of internal affairs. It does not constitute a threat to the world's peace and security. The situation in Zimbabwe is quite complex and sensitive at present. The relevant negotiating process has begun. By adopting a resolution imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe now, the Security Council would unavoidably be interfering with the negotiating process. That would lead to a further deterioration of the situation.

At present, the situation in Zimbabwe is the focus of broad attention in the international community. Maintaining peace and stability in Zimbabwe is in the interests not only of the people of Zimbabwe, but of the countries of the region as well. China sincerely hopes that the opposing sides in Zimbabwe will maintain calm and exercise restraint, cease all violent acts and avoid taking any action that may lead to a further deterioration in or exacerbation of the situation in the country, so as to establish favourable conditions and enable the negotiating process to continue. China calls upon all parties in Zimbabwe to cooperate with the good offices efforts of the countries and organizations in the region to find a way to achieve political reconciliation as soon as possible in order to peacefully settle the question of Zimbabwe through consultation and dialogue.

Mr. Belle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): We sincerely regret that the draft resolution could not be adopted today. Although the vote reflected our differing positions as to the means to be used, we are nevertheless resolutely unanimous as regards the seriousness of the situation in Zimbabwe and the goals to be pursued. All Council members are convinced of the need for a political transition in Zimbabwe. Belgium was a sponsor of the draft resolution and voted in its favour. We did so because we believed it to be a vital incentive to achieving a negotiated settlement in Zimbabwe.

We welcome the efforts of the Southern African Development Community and the African Union. However, we believe that, without pressure, there will be no negotiation. To that end, the Council's actions in general, and the draft resolution in particular, should support the mediation efforts in the region. We hope that Zimbabweans in Harare understand that we have clearly heard their appeals and have met our responsibilities to ensure respect for their legitimate aspirations for democracy.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are all aware of the deplorable economic situation in which the people of Zimbabwe find themselves and the serious and widespread violations of their human rights being committed, primarily by their Government. That issue did not give rise to a great deal of discussion during the debate on the draft resolution that has just been put before the Council. Among other things, differences in position focused on whether the Charter authorized the Council to adopt the draft resolution before it, given that some members believe that the situation in Zimbabwe is strictly an internal affair that does not pose a risk to either international or regional peace.

Panama believes that, while it is true that when the Charter initially gave the Security Council responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, it was referring mainly to conflicts between States. In today's globalized and interdependent world, the concept of threats to international peace has evolved to include situations in which there are serious and widespread violations of human rights such as those being suffered today by the people of Zimbabwe. In that connection, I shall limit myself to referring to the report of the Secretary-General, which states that the seriousness of the situation and its potential consequences could have widespread repercussions for regional peace and security.

For those reasons, Panama voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): In line with the position of the European Union, we believe that the people of Zimbabwe deserve to enjoy the right to express its legitimate will and that the conditions for democracy and respect for human rights should be quickly restored in the country.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): The United States is disappointed that the Russian Federation and China today prevented the Security Council from adopting a strong draft resolution condemning and sanctioning the violent regime of Robert Mugabe. China and Russia have stood with Mugabe against the people of Zimbabwe.

More than a majority of the members of the Security Council stood with the people of Zimbabwe by demanding that Mugabe put an immediate end to the violence and start serious negotiations with the opposition. The draft resolution would have supported the courageous efforts of the Zimbabwean people to change their lives peacefully, through elections. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation and China blocked the adoption of this draft resolution for reasons that we think are not borne out by the facts on the ground.

The U-turn in the Russian position is particularly surprising and disturbing. Only a few days ago, the Russian Federation was supportive of a Group of Eight (G-8) statement that said:

> "We express our grave concern about the situation in Zimbabwe. We deplore the fact that the Zimbabwean authorities pressed ahead with the presidential election despite the absence of appropriate conditions for free and fair voting as a result of their systematic violence, obstruction and intimidation.
>
> "...
>
> "... We recommend the appointment of a special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to report on the political, humanitarian, human rights and security situation and to support regional efforts to take forward mediation between political parties. We will take further steps, inter alia introducing financial and other measures against those individuals responsible for violence."

The Russian performance here today raises questions about the Russian Federation's reliability as a G-8 partner.

There should be no doubt that what is happening in Zimbabwe affects peace and security in the region. Deputy Secretary-General Migiro called the situation in Zimbabwe the "single greatest challenge to regional stability in Southern Africa". The African Union adopted a resolution expressing its concern regarding the "urgent need to prevent further worsening of the situation and [taking a decision] with a view to avoiding the spread of conflict with the consequential negative impact on the country and the subregion".

Three African States — Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso — were among the sponsors of the draft resolution before the Council today. Liberia and Sierra Leone, whose democratic Governments emerged after years of conflict, with the help of the United Nations and the Security Council, joined in sponsoring the draft resolution as an indication of their concern about the impact of the situation in Zimbabwe on the region. We applaud their courage in standing up for the people of Zimbabwe.

Further, there are no serious, substantive negotiations under way between the Mugabe regime and the opposition, contrary to what the representative of South Africa reported. The Mugabe regime and the representatives from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) had a preliminary meeting in South Africa the other day, in which the MDC laid down conditions for substantive negotiations. But these are not yet under way.

Finally, this draft resolution would have supported regional and international mediation efforts, not undercut them. This draft resolution would have empowered regional and international mediators by giving Mr. Mugabe an incentive to negotiate seriously. The surest way for Mr. Mugabe to have avoided a sanctions resolution would have been to have acted immediately to end the violence and start serious negotiations with the opposition. He had a week since our introduction of this draft resolution to act. Unfortunately, during that time violence has continued, as has Mr. Mugabe's bellicose rhetoric. For example, Mugabe's spokesman, George Charamba, said of those drawing attention to the flaws in the post-29-March electoral process, "They can go hang. They can go and hang a thousand times". That is an irresponsible response and shows the regime's contempt for the people of Zimbabwe as well as for the international community.

Although this draft resolution was not adopted, we will continue to work with all Security Council delegations to monitor closely the situation in Zimbabwe and to urge the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative to support the negotiation process between the political parties in Zimbabwe and to report to the Council on the political, humanitarian, human rights and security situation in Zimbabwe.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Angola.

Mr. Antonio (Angola) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, I should like to express my delegation's appreciation to you personally and to all the members of the Council for having agreed to give us the floor on a question so vital for Africa. Angola is speaking as Chair of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

As all Council members will know, that Organ and the facilitator of the intra-Zimbabwean dialogue, His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, are sparing no effort to implement the African Union decision adopted recently in Sharm el-Sheikh encouraging the parties to initiate a dialogue to promote peace, stability, democracy and reconciliation between themselves. Very fortunately, this dialogue, is getting under way with South African mediation. Moreover, a delegation headed by His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, went to Zimbabwe this week, as Thabo Mbeki had done before him.

There is ongoing cooperation between Luanda and Pretoria in these efforts. As was mentioned by the representative of the Russian Federation, President José Eduardo dos Santos and President Thabo Mbeki are sparing no effort to help the endeavours for a viable solution succeed. Given all the efforts that I have indicated, the adoption of a draft resolution sanctioning one of the parties would tend in the present circumstances to further complicate things on the ground and exacerbate tensions to the point of damaging the ongoing dialogue.

The efforts in the region are in keeping with the spirit of the United Nations Charter. Recognizing the importance of such endeavours, the Security Council has devoted several public meetings to the role of regional and subregional organizations and has adopted statements and resolutions on that subject that were not intended to remain dead letters. The outcome of this year's New York meeting between the Security Council and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (see S/PV.5868) is of interest here. Paragraph 9 of resolution 1809 (2008), for example, clearly stipulates the need for coordination between the African Union and the Security Council on peace and security.

In a number of situations the Security Council has demonstrated that it can truly listen to the region. Thus, when appropriate, it would be logical for the Council refrain from creating exceptions, giving the impression that it listens to the region only when the message suits certain Council members.

Having experienced more than 40 years of conflict, the Southern African subregion is in a good position to appreciate the true value of peace and stability in the region. Thus, it is working towards that goal — including through economic integration, as SADC has continued to demonstrate.

It is clear that we are all concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe. But there are differences in approach as to the methods to find a sustainable solution. For our part, we believe that we should give dialogue a chance: we recognize the virtues of such dialogue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this special meeting of the Security Council to debate the political crisis in Zimbabwe.

The Council has already expressed concern over the possible implications of the Zimbabwe crisis for regional peace and security by adopting its presidential statement of 23 June 2008 (S/PRST/2008/23). The crisis has since deepened, with the flawed presidential elections in Zimbabwe of 27 June 2008, as witnessed by election monitors from African institutions. The African Union has expressed its heightened concern and engagement regarding the crisis in Zimbabwe, by adopting unanimously on 1 July 2008 a resolution which condemns the political motivated violence in Zimbabwe. The resolution encourages dialogue by all the parties and calls for the formation of a government of national unity. The resolution ushers in a new and more robust initiative to address the precarious Zimbabwe political and security situation. It merits serious consideration by the Security Council in order to enable the Council to work in tandem with the African Union and to create an atmosphere in Zimbabwe and the region that is more conducive to a negotiated settlement.

The political significance of the African Union resolution for the prospects for advancing the peace process in Zimbabwe lies in five areas which the Council may wish to consider as the way forward to support the peace initiative of Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) intended to address the situation in Zimbabwe.

First, the African Union resolution has the full political backing of the entire membership of the African Union, which now remains fully seized of the issue.

Secondly, the resolution is advancing the peace process from a facilitation mode by President Mbeki before the elections to a mediation effort in the post-election period.

Thirdly, the resolution calls upon SADC to form a mediation mechanism which was not there before for the exclusive purpose of initiating a dialogue among the parties and the formation of a government of national unity in Zimbabwe.

Fourthly, as we speak, President Mbeki has started fresh efforts to prepare for the SADC mediation. The 14 ministers of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation are meeting on 16 July 2008 in Durban to elaborate on the mandate and modalities of negotiations and mediation by the proposed mechanism, which should begin to function expeditiously.

Finally, the resolution further calls for undivided support from the entire international community for the new political process initiated by SADC and the African Union.

In the light of these new developments, the Council should consider focusing on supporting the new political initiative which has begun and should give it a chance to proceed. At this stage, the political option should take precedence over the punitive option. We urge the adoption of a judicious combination and calibrated sequencing of approaches to this crisis without prejudice to the powers and rights of the Security Council to determine its agenda and priorities.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Lila H. Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana: First of all, Mr. President, I wish to thank you for inviting us to address the Security Council on this important question. I take this opportunity to commend the Council for the significant amount of attention it continues to devote to a number of issues of concern to Africa.

Africa is fully seized of the complexity of the situation in Zimbabwe. And, as we all witnessed, at the recently concluded summit in Sharm el-Sheikh African leaders shouldered their full responsibility to address the issue within the context of efforts towards strengthening democratic governance throughout the continent. The African Union (AU) has been closely monitoring and working on the situation in Zimbabwe, together with the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It is in that context that key components of the African Union such as the Pan-African Parliament, SADC as the subregional organization concerned and the AU Commission have all been closely engaged and have deployed various efforts towards the preparation and observation of the election in Zimbabwe. The efforts made so far have included the deployment of almost 1,000 election observers from various bodies within the continent and the active involvement of leaders such as President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, former President Kabbah of Sierra Leone, who leads the African Union observation team for the election, and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Jean Ping.

Furthermore, both the Executive Council of the African Union and the Assembly of 53 countries' heads of State or Government devoted serious attention to the question during the summit in Sharm el-Sheikh. A resolution was issued, by which the Assembly expressed its deep concern at the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe. We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for drawing the attention of the Council to that decision, to which various speakers have referred today.

Considering the urgent need to prevent the further worsening of the situation, and in order to avoid the spread of conflict, with the consequent negative impact on the country and the subregion, and further considering the need to create an environment conducive to democracy, the Assembly decided to encourage President Robert Mugabe and the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, to honour their commitment to initiate dialogue with a view to promoting peace, stability, democracy and the reconciliation of the Zimbabwean people; to support the call for the creation of a government of national unity; to support the SADC facilitation; and to recommend that SADC mediation efforts should be continued in order to resolve the problems that are being faced. In that regard, SADC should establish a mechanism on the ground in order to seize the momentum for a negotiated solution. The Assembly also decided to appeal to States and all parties concerned to refrain from any action that may have a negative impact on the climate of dialogue.

The Assembly also expressed its conviction that, in the spirit of all SADC initiatives, the people of Zimbabwe will be able to resolve their differences and work together once again as one nation, provided they receive undivided support from SADC, the African Union and the world at large.

Today, we still wish to appeal to the Security Council to lend its full support to the implementation of that resolution of the African Union and to give the region's current efforts a chance. SADC and the African Union are working unrelentingly towards the speedy resolution of the political crisis in Zimbabwe and are working to facilitate reconciliation of the Zimbabwean people.

Today, we, the African Union and SADC, also need the full support and confidence of the international community in assuming leadership in the resolution of this African political crisis.

It is indeed because we are fully cognizant of the seriousness of the situation in Zimbabwe that we, as Africans, have assumed our full responsibility for finding an acceptable and lasting political solution.

Finally, we believe that the support of the Council for the decision of the African Union would be an expression of solidarity with the entire African community and, indeed, solidarity with the Zimbabwean people.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5934

Security Council

Distr.: General
16 July 2008

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 5934th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 16 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

> "On 16 July 2008, the Security Council, pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001), annex II, sections A and B, held its 5934th meeting in private with the troop-contributing countries to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.
>
> "The Security Council and the troop-contributing countries heard a briefing under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure by Major General Per-Arne Five, Acting Military Adviser of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.
>
> "Members of the Council, Major General Five and representatives of participating troop-contributing countries had an exchange of views."

United Nations S/PV.5935

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5935th meeting

Wednesday, 16 July 2008, 1.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Van Kemseke
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Somdah
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Scračić
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Trambajolo
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bayley
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting was called to order at 1.15 p.m.

Expression of farewell to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

The President: As this is the last appearance in the Security Council of Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno in his capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, I wish, on behalf of the members of the Council, to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Guéhenno for his outstanding and dedicated service to the work of the United Nations, in particular as regards peacekeeping and related matters. Throughout both times of relative stability and times of change and crisis on the ground, the knowledge and insights Mr. Guéhenno has shared with the members of the Council have been invaluable. For that we are immensely grateful. In saying farewell to him, we wish Mr. Guéhenno all the best for his professional and personal well-being.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Rwanda and Uganda, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ndabarasa (Rwanda) and Mr. Butagira (Uganda) took seats at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council condemns in the strongest possible terms the attack on 8 July 2008 on an African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) military and police convoy in Um Hakibah by 200 fighters on horses and in 40 vehicles, using sophisticated weaponry and tactics, which resulted in the deaths of 7 peacekeepers and a further 22 United Nations/African Union personnel being wounded. This unacceptable act of extreme violence is the largest attack on UNAMID since the transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan on 31 December 2007. The Council is particularly concerned that the attack was premeditated, deliberate and intended to inflict casualties.

"The Security Council welcomes the United Nations investigation under way and the Government of the Sudan's statement to assist the United Nations investigation. It calls on the Government of the Sudan to do its utmost to ensure that the perpetrators of the attack are swiftly identified and brought to justice. The Council underlines its determination to take action against those responsible after hearing the outcome of UNAMID's investigation.

"The Security Council expresses its condolences to the Governments of Rwanda, Ghana and Uganda for the deaths of their peacekeepers and to the victims' families. It commends the dedication of UNAMID personnel. The Council stresses that any attack or threat against UNAMID is unacceptable, and demands that there be no reoccurrence. It underlines that attacks on United Nations peacekeepers during an armed conflict can constitute war crimes under applicable international law and calls upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

"The Security Council calls on all parties to agree to a cessation of hostilities, to engage fully and constructively in the political process under the leadership of the new United Nations/African Union joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Djibrill Yipènè Bassole, and to cooperate fully with the deployment of UNAMID and respect its security and freedom of movement.

"The Security Council further calls on the United Nations and all parties to facilitate the rapid and complete deployment of UNAMID and on capable Member States to contribute the helicopter and transportation units necessary to ensure the successful implementation of UNAMID's mandate."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2008/27.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5936th meeting

Thursday, 17 July 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

***President*:**	Mr. Pham Gia Khiem/Mr. Bui The Giang	(Viet Nam)
***Members*:**	**Belgium**	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2008/442)

Letter dated 11 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/455)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2008/442)

Letter dated 11 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/455)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Rwanda, Somalia, San Marino, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Uruguay, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Edmond Mullet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Ms. Kathleen Hunt, Chair of the International Steering Committee, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of the Council members to document S/2008/455, which contains a letter from the Permanent Representative of France addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the report of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

I should also like to draw attention to document S/2008/442, which contains a letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

First of all, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his participation in this open debate of the Security Council. I look forward to listening to his insight into the important issue of children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their presence and for the briefings they are going to present to the Council.

Being one of the first countries to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a country where generations of children have suffered immensely from war, Viet Nam is committed to defending and promoting the best interests of children. Our concerns for children affected by armed conflict go beyond conventional reasoning. Viet Nam, as President of the Security Council for this month, has taken the initiative to organize this open debate to strengthen the commitment and efforts of the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community at large towards achieving a long-term and sustained solution to these issues. I thank all members of the Council for sharing the interest.

Since the adoption of its first resolution on children and armed conflict in 1999, the actions taken by the Security Council have produced tangible progress. Formal and informal action plans have been concluded between parties to conflict to identify and release children from fighting forces and to prevent further recruitment. Thousands of children associated with armed groups have thus been released. Specific provisions have been included in peace processes and agreements. Child protection provisions have been incorporated in the mandates of a number of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. Regular reviews and reports to the Council by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as its valuable recommendations to the Council and country visits by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, along with the work done by UNICEF, have contributed to those achievements.

However, we have to admit that what has been achieved remains too modest. The overall situation of children affected by armed conflict continues to be of serious concern. The international community continues to witness the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The killing and maiming, sexual violence against and abduction of children and attacks against schools and hospitals continue. We condemn those acts and urge all parties concerned to put an end to them.

The Security Council, in its presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/6) last February, outlined a number of important measures to move forward its agenda on children and armed conflict. Viet Nam attaches great importance to a strategy aimed at preventing armed conflict by addressing its root cause and enhancing the protection of children.

The successful implementation of such a comprehensive strategy requires not only participation but also cooperation among the parties concerned and other stakeholders, including Member States, regional organizations, the Secretariat, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To ensure effective participation and cooperation, in addition to a commitment to providing adequate resources and funding from development agencies and donor countries, it is important to promote mutual confidence and trust in a spirit of partnership, as was emphasized by the Council in its presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/6) of last February.

The consideration of country reports has very often been a difficult process, leading to the erosion of such mutual trust and spirit of partnership. National Governments should be fully consulted in order to avoid such situations and ensure the quality, reliability and objectivity of those reports.

Resolution 1612 (2005) should continue to serve as the basis for improving the reporting and monitoring mechanisms, as well as the activities of the Working Group. We look forward to contributing to the continued improvement of the Group's methods of work.

As a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we join others in calling upon those countries that have not done so to accede to the Protocol.

Finally, I am deeply convinced that, with genuine concern and a spirit of partnership on the part of its members, the Security Council — with the support of and in close coordination with other United Nations agencies, NGOs and countries concerned — can fulfil its commitment to addressing the widespread impact of armed conflict on children.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, at this meeting and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the presidency of the Council for organizing a discussion on this important topic.

The protection of children in armed conflict is a litmus test for the United Nations and the Organization's Member States. It is a moral call and deserves to be placed above politics. It requires the innovative and fearless engagement of all stakeholders.

Over the past 12 years, that issue has been placed firmly on the international agenda, beginning with the groundbreaking report of Graça Machel and the establishment of the mandate of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Since then, a solid body of international legal standards has been elaborated. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court classifies the recruitment of children into fighting forces as a war crime and a crime against humanity. The International Labour Organization's

Convention No. 182 defines child soldiering as one of the worst forms of child labour. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child outlaws child soldiering, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child established 18 as the minimum age for children's participation in hostilities. With that foundation in place, the international community is now shifting its focus from standards-setting to an era of application and the provision of real protection. Indeed, we have seen encouraging signs that impunity for crimes against children will no longer be tolerated.

For its part, the Security Council held its first open debate on the subject in 1998 and has returned to the matter again and again. Its resolutions have focused in particular on six grave violations drawn from international humanitarian law: abduction, sexual violence, child soldiers, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access. The Council has established a Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and the monitoring and reporting mechanism is now operational in 15 situations of concern. I am also encouraged to note that action plans from several parties to conflict have been secured, in which those parties agree to the release of children from their ranks.

Of course, once children are released, we must be ready to support their full and sustainable reintegration into society, in line with the good practices set out in the Paris Principles. I call on the international community to strengthen its support for Governments, development partners and others involved in such efforts, including through the mobilization of the necessary resources. Let us not forget that poverty and underdevelopment can make children more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

I commend the Council for its work on this issue, which is beginning to yield results. Yet we have only begun to scratch the surface. I hope that the Council will consolidate the gains that have been made and move forward to cover all grave violations and all situations of concern. Political will is crucial. Only concerted international efforts involving all United Nations partners will be capable of meeting the needs of children living in situations of armed conflict. I look forward to working with the Council so that children can be safe and, above all, so that they may dream of a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: I welcome you here to New York and to this Chamber, Mr. President. I also welcome the opportunity to participate in this open debate on the theme of children and armed conflict. I thank the delegation of Viet Nam and Mr. Le Luong Minh for their foresightedness in choosing this topic and for working with dedication on this issue of importance to all of us. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence here today and for his constant support of this mandate. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and all its members for their tireless efforts in bringing this issue to bear in the work of the Council. For the many children who have benefited from its robust action, I would like to further thank the Council on their behalf.

Earlier this year, we had an opportunity to undertake such an open debate around the annual report (S/2007/757) of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. During that debate, I stressed the concerns of the report, reiterating the position that the Security Council is the United Nations body of action on issues of peace and security and that it should take steps to begin to consider targeted and concrete measures against the 16 persistent violators who have been on the shame list of the Secretary-General's report for four consecutive years. I also requested the Council to consider moving the agenda forward and to expand the scope of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to cover all situations of concern and all grave violations against children, especially the crime of sexual violence, which, like the recruitment of child soldiers, is always deliberate, targeted and a direct consequence of criminal intent, and which received the special attention of the Council recently in resolution 1820 (2008). I reiterate those messages again today and hope that the Council, in its wisdom, will move towards greater protection for children in conflict zones.

In that context, I look forward to the discussions regarding the possibility of adopting a new resolution that would capture some of the concerns that have developed in the attempt to implement resolution 1612

(2005). The new resolution must move the agenda forward by expanding the gateway to the annexes to include all other grave violations or at the very least, and especially after the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), lay renewed emphasis on the question of sexual violence against children. Such a resolution should also consider the possibility of setting up a process that would eventually lead to taking targeted measures against persistent violators.

This debate on children and armed conflict thus allows us to move beyond the immediate agenda of the Security Council, to reflect on the bigger picture and the longer term issues concerning children and armed conflict. During the course of the year, Member States have expressed the view that my Office should look more deeply into the root causes of grave violations against children, especially the phenomenon of children associated with armed groups, and also look more closely at the problems of reintegration and sustainable development. As a result, my Office is in the process of convening a research project on the root causes of children being associated with armed groups, and we hope to convene a meeting later this month of child protection experts to identify the crucial messages and gaps with regard to reintegrating children affected by conflict into their societies.

The reintegration of children in situations of armed conflict is a long-term process. A recent seminal study by the Harvard School of Public Health, which followed former child combatants over a 10-year period, showed that the impact of the conflict continues even after 10 years, with many having psychosocial problems. That is particularly true of those who were made to commit very violent crimes and those who were subject to sexual violence. Girl children had the worst indicators, with the majority having major problems with social integration because of a low level of acceptance by families and communities. The younger the children recruited and the longer they stayed associated with the armed groups, the more difficult the adjustment. Another very interesting aspect is that even children who were not associated with armed groups but who lived in situations of armed conflict displayed the same vulnerabilities. Education was found to be key for the successful recovery of children. It is for that reason that my Office and UNICEF are considering compiling a manual of best practices in line with the Paris Principles, an important initiative by the Government of France, which sets out the standards for reintegration programmes.

Although I am in perfect agreement that understanding the root causes of conflict and identifying strategies for reintegration are important, they should not steer the Council away from its task of ensuring accountability for and fighting the impunity of persistent and grave violators of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, a task in which it has supreme advantage over other organs of the United Nations, including the possibility of imposing targeted measures. While the funds and programmes and other parts of the United Nations are well placed to respond to root causes and the need for sustainable development, it is the Security Council that can focus on grave violations. The Council, as the guardian organ of peace and security, must concentrate on taking action against those who persistently violate its resolutions. Though it must deepen its understanding, it must not move away from its central focus. It will be most effective if it focuses on taking firm action against those who commit grave violations against children and who, by doing so, threaten peace and security.

Over the past three months, I have visited Iraq, Chad, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan to review first-hand the problems of children affected by armed conflict in those situations of concern. In Chad and the Central African Republic in particular, I have seen how the Council's work under resolution 1612 (2005) is having a direct effect on the ground, how the imprimatur of the Council results in non-State actors entering into agreements and releasing children, how Governments sit up and listen and how child protection activists, both within and outside the United Nations system, are strengthened and empowered by the Council's commitment. All of that is a tribute to the Council's willingness to embark on the unprecedented initiative that is resolution 1612 (2005). I wish I could bring the children who have been released from the clutches of armed groups because of the Council's actions so that it might see the fruit of its work. It is important that we collectively reassert our commitment on this issue, so that we may move forward realistically and move the agenda as well.

Finally, my visits to Iraq and Afghanistan have convinced me that the nature of warfare is changing, that there are different and more difficult challenges ahead in protecting children and that the Council must play its part. Aisha was the 11-year-old girl we met in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. Throughout the one hour I was with her and her family, she did not smile, and her eyes reflected sadness. Her family was a victim of collateral damage, and her school had been attacked by insurgents. Yet, despite all the dangers, she was determined to go to school, and her eyes lit up only when she said she hoped to be a teacher.

The time has come for us to redouble our efforts in those regions and to renew our commitment to ensuring that children will not be recruited or used as suicide bombers, that they will not be detained in military detention without due process that protects their vulnerability as minors, that their schools will not be attacked, that they or their families will not become collateral damage and that girl children will not be the targets of sexual violence or be denied access to school. Children in those harsh battlegrounds must also be able to dream of a democratic world, free of violence, guided by tolerance and diversity, where everyone will live in peace and dignity.

I end my statement today with the words of Emmanuel Jal, the former child soldier from Sudan who filled Conference Room 4 yesterday with a song he dedicated to the humanitarian worker who rescued him along with 175 others. He said, "I stand here because someone cared. I stand here because someone dared. The sky is now my limit".

The President: I thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. I now give the floor to Mr. Edmond Mullet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Mullet: Thank you, Mr. President, for inviting the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to attend this debate.

This debate is a testament to the great significance that the Security Council attributes to the question of children and armed conflict. Over the past decade, there has been universal recognition that conflicts inflict far-reaching and devastating consequences upon children. The landmark 1996 study, "Impact of armed conflict on children", the Machel study (A/51/306), highlighted the harrowing plight of children in conflict situations.

As indicated in the concept paper before the Council (S/2008/442), we in DPKO have stepped up to the challenge, made considerable progress and achieved tangible results. Since 2001, specific provisions on child protection have been included in over 12 peacekeeping mission mandates, and the Security Council has adopted six resolutions on children and armed conflict. The Council has also repeatedly called for the integration of the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict into all aspects of peacemaking. The Security Council's resolutions have guided DPKO's work in the area of children. In 2001, we deployed the first child protection adviser, to Sierra Leone. Today, the Department hosts over 60 child protection advisers in seven peacekeeping missions, who work to ensure that our missions adopt a child-conscious approach. Through them, DPKO has achieved the following.

In virtually every mission with child protection advisers, training on children's rights has been a key activity. For example, in 2007 the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) conducted 126 training sessions for over 3,200 peacekeeping personnel, including the police and civilians. In the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Child Protection Section conducted training for over 800 personnel, both uniformed and civilian, in the last quarter of 2007 alone.

In 2005, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, in close collaboration with the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and partners, initiated a dialogue with the parties to the conflict, in accordance with Security Council resolutions to end recruitment and use of child soldiers. By 2007, over 1400 children had been released from armed groups. Today, over 3,000 children have benefited from reintegration programmes implemented by UNICEF and partners. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to lead advocacy efforts to release children associated with armed groups in the east, estimated to be at least 10 per cent of the estimated 25,000 troops in the region.

Child-protection advisors have played a critical role in monitoring and reporting child-rights violations. In countries where the monitoring and reporting mechanism is being implemented, DPKO co-chairs the United Nations country taskforce on monitoring and reporting with UNICEF. This mechanism not only contributes to holding perpetrators of child-rights violations accountable, but also serves as a critical tool to guide the response of child-protection actors to the needs of children on the ground.

DPKO has also been effective in conducting advocacy on politically sensitive issues. Through such work, DPKO supports operational partners, who may be unable to engage in overt political advocacy with regard to violations of child-rights without risking the jeopardization of their long-term programmes on the ground. The integrated mission approach also ensures that we work closely and synchronize our efforts with partners, such as UNICEF, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on children's issues.

As long as children continue to suffer from war and its consequences, including weak justice systems, a deficit in basic infrastructure and poverty, we cannot falter in our effort or celebrate success. We must strive to ensure an environment in which children's rights are fully respected and their welfare is protected, i.e. a peaceful and just environment in which they can flourish and meaningfully contribute to their communities.

DPKO is contributing to these efforts through the very nature of its operations aimed at helping societies begin to rise from the ashes of conflict and instability. In this connection, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti has been actively working, through the justice section and the United Nations police, in close collaboration with UNICEF, on juvenile justice, legal reform and capacity building of the police and local judicial actors. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a new comprehensive law on the protection of children was recently adopted by the national assembly; it represents a product of intensive and concerted advocacy efforts of all child-protection actors on the ground.

These achievements have been made possible by the mandate given to us by the Security Council. DPKO is committed to protecting children in armed conflict and is currently developing a departmental policy to better guide our work in this regard. Meanwhile, we will continue to look to the Security Council for mandates with clear and robust provisions for the protection of children.

The President: I thank Mr. Mullet for his statement. I shall now give the floor to Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Ms. Veneman (UNICEF): I appreciate the opportunity to join the Security Council today to discuss the situation of children affected by armed conflict. UNICEF welcomes the President's initiative to hold this open debate to consider, in particular, how the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community as a whole can better contribute to long-term and sustainable solutions regarding the issue of children and armed conflict. I commend my colleague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless efforts in helping to draw global attention to the impact on children in situations of armed conflict.

Children continue to suffer from the horrors of war. Children have to cope with violence and the loss of family, homes and community, and many have been killed or maimed, even long after conflict has come to an end. Children also suffer from the indirect impact of war through a resurgence in preventable diseases, such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles and malaria.

Conflict and post-conflict countries have some of the highest rates of under-five mortality. Of the 33 countries affected by armed conflict during 2002 to 2006, 20 have experienced insufficient or no progress towards the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on child mortality. Conflict and strife often break down public health services and the rule of law and contribute to food insecurity, population displacement and continued insecurity. Rehabilitation of key services and infrastructure requires security and political stability.

When entire communities are in a state of upheaval, schools can provide a safe haven and a sense of normality. It is therefore crucial that their sanctity be protected and that access to vital services, such as health care, clean water and basic sanitation are not disrupted.

UNICEF welcomes the endorsement by 92 States of the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and encourages other States to join this process. The Declaration will contribute to the protection of children through the promotion of actions to reduce armed violence, improve human security and build a culture of peace.

UNICEF has a long history of advocating and assisting in the release and reintegration of children used by armed forces and groups. We know from experience that it is possible to reintegrate these children, especially when they are provided with assistance and the skills needed to become positive and productive members of society. Yet reintegration is a difficult and long-term process requiring a long-term commitment. UNICEF works with States and non-State actors to stop the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

The 2007 Paris Commitments reinforce international consensus on the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. These commitments also reiterate measures States can take to protect children caught in conflict and the steps they can take to help reintegrate them with their families and their communities.

Children become associated with armed conflict groups for many reasons. They may have no choice or they might view enlistment as their best survival option, or as a way of escaping other violence and discrimination.

Reintegrating children into communities needs to be done with an eye to future stability, not only of the child, but of society as a whole. Some important lessons have been learned. One is that reintegration programmes must avoid further stigmatizing the child. Successful reintegration also requires predictable and sustained funding that can be disbursed in a timely manner and that will continue to be available despite periods of instability. As has been shown in northern Uganda and Sri Lanka, children's lives can be improved by protection measures and reintegration activities, even while political solutions are being sought.

UNICEF greatly appreciates the commitment and the efforts of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The purpose of the monitoring and reporting mechanism is to monitor, report and respond to the situation of child victims of conflict in order to reduce the occurrence of grave violations against children, enhance accountability of perpetrators and prevent further grave violations in situations of armed conflict.

As we approach the third anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) and the setting up of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, there are promising signs of progress. In Côte d'Ivoire and Sri Lanka, for example, recruitment and use of children in conflict has diminished significantly. Yet, more must be done to better monitor, prevent and respond to violations against children and to ensure respect for the rule of law.

Girls and women in conflict situations are extremely vulnerable because of the sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces and groups. Sexual violence is too often used as a weapon of war. The Security Council's recent resolution 1820 (2008) is a welcome expression of its determination to take measures to address sexual violence against children, particularly girls.

Earlier this year, I visited Sierra Leone. While there, I met a young woman named Mariatu, who was a victim of the many years of conflict in that country. At the age of 12, she was captured and raped, and both of her arms were cut off by the perpetrators. Her story is still unfolding. She had never been to school, but today she is attending university in Canada.

The best way to protect children is to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict and violence in the first place. Development and post-conflict reconstruction, if done well, can address the root causes of violence and thus protect children from exposure to armed conflict. As Graça Machel urged in 2001, we "must shatter the political inertia that allows circumstances to escalate into armed conflict and destroy children's lives" (*A/51/306, para. 253*).

UNICEF hopes that today's discussions will help strengthen the collective commitment to protect children from conflict and violence across the political, humanitarian and development agendas of the United Nations. UNICEF, through its mandate, its country presence before, during and after crises, and its capacity to advocate for children can contribute to the prevention of conflict as well as to immediate and long-term solutions once conflict has erupted.

The challenge is immense but not insurmountable. Children continue to bear the brunt of conflict, but they also demonstrate resilience and the capacity to overcome the violence around them and to help build peace within themselves and within their communities.

Ishmael Beah, with whose painful story many of us are familiar, is a case in point. His powerful and best-selling book chronicles his experiences as a child soldier in Sierra Leone and his difficult transition back to a normal life with the help of UNICEF. Last November, I appointed Ishmael as a UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by War. He continues to speak on behalf of young people whose childhoods have been scarred by abuse, violence and deprivation.

Let us never forget the stories of Ishmael, Mariatu and thousands more like them as we move forward with a shared sense of urgency in helping to build a better world for children.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Kathleen Hunt, Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Hunt: On behalf of my colleagues on the Steering Committee of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict and the hundreds of members of our network around the world, I thank the Government of Viet Nam for hosting today's open debate and for offering this opportunity to civil society representatives to brief the Security Council. Welcome to New York, Sir.

I also wish to express our appreciation for the significant time and effort that all members of the Security Council have dedicated to implementing the Council's own groundbreaking mandates, including its resolutions 1325 (2000), 1460 (2003), 1530 (2004), 1612 (2005) and, recently, 1820 (2008). Think of the ordinary people we know in war-ravaged villages who really do look to the Council to exercise its power to achieve real improvements for their girls and boys thousands of miles from this Chamber.

The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a coalition of non-governmental organizations that brings together the resources of both operational humanitarian and human rights agencies. Five and a half years ago, the Watchlist first appeared before the Security Council in an Arria formula briefing to reiterate the call by Mrs. Graça Machel — in her landmark survey on the effects of armed conflict, already mentioned today — to make children and armed conflict a matter of international peace and security and to create a United Nations-led monitoring and reporting system to protect children caught up in war.

Since then, as previous speakers have outlined, the Security Council's leadership on children in armed conflict has made significant progress. Thanks to the country-level task forces mandated under resolution 1612 (2005), the consolidation of efforts carried out under United Nations country teams, peacekeeping operations and the Peacebuilding Commission demonstrates the Organization's enormous potential to prevent egregious violations, to respond to them quickly and to end impunity for their assailants.

However, given those successes and the Security Council's potential to totally change the lives of children in the most dangerous circumstances, there is no time to lose. The Council must maintain its momentum and enable the groundbreaking Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to carry out the mandate that the Council has given it. That means, first and foremost, overcoming the delays and deadlocks that have impeded the formulation of conclusions for specific reports and making use of the range of tools in the Working Group's innovative "tool kit".

Equally crucial in countries emerging from decades of violence and destruction, it means ensuring that programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of children are executed in a timely manner and are sufficiently resourced over the necessary long term so that girls and boys can enjoy their basic rights to life, health and education in their community's painful transition from bloodshed to development.

When the Security Council became seized of the plight of children and armed conflict, it was at a time when hideous images of boys and girls slung with bandoliers and Kalashnikov rifles, of civilians with hacked-off limbs and of sexual savagery shocked the human spirit, as they continue to do. Since then, the monitoring and reporting system mandated by the Council under resolution 1612 (2005) has made considerable advances, which the Watchlist documented in a study of four countries, released before last February's open debate. The Council's recent resolution 1820 (2008), as mentioned by previous speakers, gives added hope for more robust action to stop the rampage of sexual violence in armed conflict and to provide desperately needed protection and services to children and women.

Our statement is a call to action urging all those present here, representatives of other States Members of the United Nations, regional bodies, civil society and national Governments to respond with the resources and remedies needed to ensure that their historic commitments to children and to international peace and security do not lapse into vacant clichés. To that end, we urge the Council to act without delay on the following five priorities.

First, it is necessary to demand accountability from perpetrators by imposing targeted measures when warranted.

Secondly, the Council should call on its Working Group to continue to review reports of violations, to complete effective conclusions in a timely manner, to make practical recommendations for action and to utilize all the tools at its disposal.

Thirdly, we urge the Council to support the system-wide strengthening of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and, as others have urged, to expand the scope of the mechanism to include sexual violence as a trigger for activating it.

Fourthly, it is also essential that donors adequately resource DDR programmes for children, with an emphasis on the necessary long-term, community-based reintegration programmes, as precisely described by Special Representative Coomaraswamy.

Finally, looking towards the coming year, we ask the Council to reaffirm its readiness to build upon the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005) with a view to increasing the efficiency of the resolution's key aspects through a new resolution on children and armed conflict in 2009.

As with all matters of peace and security, but especially those concerning the most vulnerable populations, we urge the Security Council to maintain its vigilance and overcome obstacles — usually political — that block full implementation of its resolutions. Resolution 1612 (2005), together with its related body of law, has set global standards and, indeed, has made a global promise. It is a promise we urge the Council to keep.

The President: I thank Ms. Hunt for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, Chairman of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and Permanent Representative of France.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to thank the Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam for his initiative in convening us here today for this meeting on children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman and Mr. Mullet for their contributions to this debate, and more generally, for their tireless devotion to the cause of children in armed conflict. We have also listened with the greatest attention to the remarks and suggestions made by the representative of Watchlist.

I would like to make a number of brief comments on the annual report on the activities of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) (S/2008/445), a working group I have had the honour of chairing for the past year. The report reflects the sustained activity of the Working Group that has accompanied the implementation of the monitoring and reporting machinery under resolution 1612 (2005) in an increased number of situations of conflict. The activities focused on reviewing the reports produced by this machinery and adopting operational conclusions on the reports. The negotiation of these conclusions required efforts of varying intensity, depending on the situation under review, which, on some occasions, led to delays between the review of the report and the adoption of conclusions. Nevertheless, the Working Group has managed to adopt detailed conclusions for all the situations it has reviewed.

These conclusions provide the parties concerned with specific indications about the measures that have to be taken or that are recommended for the release of child soldiers and also is a useful tool for actors in the field such as UNICEF, child-protection advisers in the peacekeeping operations or the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during her visits, allowing them to obtain results.

I would also like to recall that the Working Group currently functions without using Secretariat resources other than the use of meeting rooms and interpretation, which unfortunately is not always available, a problem that runs counter to the rules of the Organization.

I would like to conclude on this point by thanking all members of the Working Group for their contributions. The initial results obtained should encourage us all to pursue with determination the implementation of the mandate assigned to us by the

Security Council, aware of the opportunity given us to contribute to changing the destiny of children in armed conflict also gives us great responsibilities. Individually and collectively, we must shoulder these responsibilities.

I would now like to speak on behalf of the European Union and those countries that have aligned themselves with this statement. My full statement can be found in the document that has been disseminated in the Chamber. I would here like to single out the key points of the European Union's position: support for the analysis and recommendations in the Secretary-General's reports on children in armed conflict; the condemnation of all violations perpetrated against children and a call for all parties to halt these crimes immediately; the importance we ascribe to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and to the role that the International Criminal Court, created by the Rome Statute exactly ten years ago day for day, plays in the fight against impunity — there will be no peace without justice; support for the Security Council's strong commitment to this issue, in particular through its resolutions, the activities of its Working Group and the use by the Council of the tools available to it, including sanctions; support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; promoting a broad-based approached to the problem, addressing development and humanitarian issues as well as security issues and the promotion of human rights.

The European Union commends the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism for all conflict situations where children are involved. The European Union welcomes the Working Group's adoption of concrete conclusions and welcomes the fact that these have led to positive results, as was reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/609-S/2007/757). It calls on all parties concerned to implement these conclusions.

The European Union also recognizes that, to date, the Working Group and the Security Council have not used or recommended using all the instruments that are available to them and encourages the Working Group and the Security Council to take resolute measures against those parties to conflict to urge them to stop violations.

Finally, the European Union invites the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to focus on the need to equip the Security Council Working Group with the required means, allowing it to continue its initiatives effectively and transparently.

The Council of the European Union affirmed in its latest conclusions that the protection and promotion of children's rights, in particular those of children affected by armed conflict, remained a priority for external action by the European Union. In June 2008, the Council of the European Union adopted an updated version of its guidelines, increasing the number of priority countries and fully integrating the Paris Commitments and Principles into European Union reference texts.

The issue of children in armed conflict is therefore better reflected in our common foreign and security policy and also in European Union security and defence operations, such as the European Union Force (EUFOR), currently in place in Chad and the Central African Republic, to protect the population of refugees and internally displaced persons from Darfur.

The European Union is financing a significant number of projects for the benefit of children in armed conflict situations. Thus, more than €100 million have been disbursed since 2000 to that end. It is imperative that the efforts undertaken in the context of resolution 1612 (2005) be supplemented by strong efforts from the international community to prevent child recruitment and to reintegrate children associated with armed groups. Moreover, as is stressed in the Paris Commitments and Principles, it is also necessary that reintegration programmes take children's diverse needs into account, in particular ensuring that girls and children with disabilities are not excluded. These programmes must be integrated into broader-based actions, targeting communities into which the children will be reintegrated. And finally, it is necessary that these programmes benefit from long-term donor commitment.

The European Union is determined to work closely with all concerned countries and organizations to prevent children from being recruited, raped, mutilated, killed or simply deprived of education and robbed of their childhood during conflicts and then abandoned or stigmatized in the post-conflict period. It calls upon the Security Council to also continue to work towards the fulfilment of these goals.

Children who are the victims of armed conflict worldwide are our children; let us not abandon them.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver condensed versions when speaking in the Council Chamber.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): The United States welcomes the opportunity to shine the spotlight at this open debate of the Security Council on one of the true evils of our time — the forcible recruitment, use and targeting of children in armed conflict. That brutal and debilitating practice can destabilize societies, perpetuate the cycle of violence, and rob innocent victims of their childhoods and their futures. We have an obligation and a vital role in helping to protect the most vulnerable members of conflict-ridden societies, especially children.

Three years ago, we adopted resolution 1612 (2005) to address the issue. We appreciate the commitment and efforts of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict under the leadership of its French Chair and its staff to make progress on that issue. In particular, it is encouraging that members of the Council have demonstrated their interest in addressing the subject by meeting regularly in the Working Group and working hard to build consensus on country-specific situations. We also welcome the efforts of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to highlight and document the problem. Her country visits have led to increased dialogue and cooperation among United Nations partners to bring about more effective protection for children affected by conflicts. All those efforts have made a difference.

However, despite our current efforts, the abhorrent practice of recruiting and using child soldiers persists in many countries. For example, in Burma, the military and non-State armed groups continue to recruit and use children as soldiers, some as young as 10-years old, and arrest children for desertion. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers and a Government-supported paramilitary group called the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) also continue to use child soldiers. While we welcome the initial release of 39 child soldiers by the TMVP, more must be done to ensure the release of the rest. In the Darfur region of the Sudan, there is ongoing recruitment and use of child soldiers both by Government soldiers, such as the Janjaweed militia, and by various armed rebels, and there is ongoing recruitment of children from refugee and internally displaced persons camps on both sides of the Chad-Sudan border.

"Recruitment" is a gentle term. It often means abduction, threats and punishment, and forcing children to commit horrific acts of murder and mutilation. Besides recruitment, there are other atrocities committed against children. For example, in Afghanistan, the Taliban and insurgents have engaged in systematic attacks on schoolchildren and school buildings, including a number of killings and bombings, in a deliberate attempt to intimidate and prevent girls from accessing education, thereby stealing their futures. The Taliban has also used children as human shields and to carry out suicide attacks.

Another deplorable act committed against children is the targeting of girls, and not seldom boys, as victims of sexual violence, including rape, during conflict situations. For example, the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict indicates that 60 per cent of the cases recorded in the northern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo involved victims between the ages of 11 and 17.

Given the problems of children and armed conflict, what more should be done? Currently, the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers are the only criteria available to the Secretary-General to bring State and non-State actors to the attention of the Security Council Working Group. It is time to review our trigger list and see whether we should include sexual violence as well. Although the Working Group of the Security Council has taken steps forward, its processes for decision-making sometimes take too long and need to be more efficient and effective. If we are serious about addressing the problem, we have to come together and use the tools that are available expeditiously. Unfortunately, some members talk the talk, but do not walk the walk. When it comes to doing things, they oppose effective and timely action.

The time has come to move forward in an expeditious fashion, focusing on the violators. Offenders need to know that the Security Council will take action and utilize the tools of targeted measures, and that there is no impunity for crimes committed against children.

Finally, we thank the Vietnamese delegation and you, Sir, for hosting this meeting on such an important topic. The recruitment, use and targeting of children in armed conflict are intolerable. The United States remains committed to using the tools available, including regular monitoring and reporting, the deployment of child protection advisors in United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions as appropriate, public condemnation, targeted measures against violators, and support for reintegration efforts to deal with that tragedy. We are counting on Viet Nam's support.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I would like first of all to convey our warmest welcome and express our thanks to you, Sir, and to the Government of Viet Nam for having taken the initiative to convene this open debate on children and armed conflicts. That is an issue to which Italy attaches the utmost importance.

Italy fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the representative of France as presidency of the European Union.

The first message we wish to bring to the membership's attention in this open debate is that, even though the Security Council's action has started to produce results, we are far from achieving the necessary protection for children caught in armed conflicts around the world. Such an ambitious goal clearly requires a renewed and concerted effort by the international community as a whole. The Security Council has indeed an essential role to play and is engaged in fulfilling its responsibilities, particularly through the intensive efforts of its Working Group, which is very well coordinated and chaired by France.

We recognize that the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and representatives of other relevant United Nations agencies, as well as many important non-governmental organizations working in that field, are providing a major contribution towards the goal we set out to achieve through the monitoring and reporting mechanisms created under resolution 1612 (2005). We particularly welcome the synergies between the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, such as the fact-finding mission to Afghanistan just referred to, and the steps taken by UNICEF to resume its activities and projects in countries such as Iraq.

On the other hand, we believe it essential that all the relevant actors of the international community — including the Governments of the countries involved, the donor countries and the multilateral institutions — join in the support and assistance to that fundamental United Nations-driven endeavour. Italy will continue to support programmes and projects aimed at the rehabilitation and reinsertion into society of child soldiers and children whose lives have been affected by armed conflicts, as it has been doing for several years, both bilaterally and through the European Union.

Outstanding efforts have already been undertaken by the United Nations, but we should acknowledge that much more remains to be done. For instance, while deploying a growing number of child protection advisers in our United Nations missions around the world, we still have not developed appropriate child protection training modules for our United Nations peacekeepers. Such training modules need to be approved and extensively applied. By doing this, we will help the United Nations address the unacceptable occurrences of sexual abuse by United Nations personnel and peacekeepers. This is something that is now long overdue, and Italy is ready to support the United Nations in any possible way in developing essential training modules.

We must also strive to mainstream child protection at all points in the peace process. Child protection must be an integral part of peace agreements and a priority of the United Nations in dealing with post-conflict scenarios and reconstruction programmes. Italy believes that only if we safeguard fundamental rights, such as access to water and health services, can children in armed conflicts be assured adequate physical protection and social reintegration.

As the scope and effectiveness of the role of the United Nations in addressing the plight of children continue to increase, Italy believes that the time has now come to start working on a new Security Council resolution on children and armed conflict. Such a resolution would allow us to factor in all the numerous lessons learned and the developments ensuing from the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005).

We believe that one very important and significant development regarding the protection of children in armed conflicts has been the recent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1820 (2008), on sexual violence in armed conflicts, which Italy is proud of having sponsored. That significant and far-reaching resolution acknowledges that sexual violence is now one of the primary threats to children in situations of armed conflict. This is what the children themselves have been clearly telling us, time and again.

Once the monitoring and reporting mechanisms are fully implemented in all countries involved, it will be time for the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, to consider sexual violence — and not only the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts — as an additional trigger for action.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Let me thank you, Your Excellency, for having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict and for being here to chair it today, which I think underscores the importance of this issue to us all. I would like to add our thanks to the French delegation, and in particular to Ambassador Ripert, for the excellent French leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

It was very good also to hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, from the representative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and from the Executive Director of UNICEF. We pay tribute to the work that they have done in raising the profile of this issue and in rehabilitating some of the children; we have heard a number of very uplifting examples today. I would like, however, to concentrate particularly on the valuable and high-quality work of the Special Representative; I think we all owe her and her team a great debt for the way she has gone about addressing this issue, and we look forward to working with her in future.

I would like to use this occasion also to recognize the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups on the ground. They often operate at great personal risk to their members, and without their support this mechanism could not operate half as effectively as it does. So, I would like to thank Ms. Kathleen Hunt, who represents the NGO community, for all the work that NGOs do.

It was very good to hear from the Secretary-General this morning. I think that, again, underscores the importance of this issue. One element of the Secretary-General's statement stuck in my mind: his plea that we keep this issue placed above politics. That cannot be said too often or too strenuously, particularly against the background of the Security Council Working Group not having always dealt with these issues as expeditiously or as comprehensively as it might.

I welcome Ambassador Ripert's annual report. We were pleased to see the range of situations covered by the Working Group over the past years. There have been a number of positive developments — and we have already heard about those from previous speakers — but, obviously, there are also many serious challenges remaining. I would like to highlight just a few of those.

In the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel, the number of children killed or injured increased in the first quarter of 2008. Children are victims of attacks on schools, and denial of humanitarian access by anti-Government elements in Afghanistan and the use of explosive devices have also led to an increase in the number of children killed or injured. Children who had been released in Nepal were then forcibly returned to cantonment areas under the control of the Communist Party of Nepal. And in Chad children in conflict areas continue to be victims of killings, maimings, recruitment and sexual violence, and humanitarian access remains difficult. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continue to recruit children, and for the fifth time in a row have been included in an annex to the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757). We would also welcome from the Special Representative, at some point, further details on progress made in the development and implementation of the action plan of parties within Burma, and we urge the Myanmar Government to adhere to its commitment to the Special Representative to cooperate in establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

Those examples illustrate the fact that the problems we are dealing with are widespread and affect many of the issues that the Security Council deals with day to day.

We have heard from previous speakers about the six grave violations: the continuing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict; the killing or maiming of children; rape and other sexual violence; abduction; denial of humanitarian access to children; and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict. Words are easy, and we should all spend some time imagining just what happens when such violations are committed, and the effects that they must have on the children involved.

The Security Council was able to show great leadership recently through resolution 1820 (2008), on women and peace and security. I think we all recognize that in conflict women and children suffer disproportionately. The United Kingdom stands ready to contribute to a review of the violations which trigger the listing of a party in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports. It is also important that such crimes not go unpunished. We support the role of the International Criminal Court, on its tenth anniversary, in investigating and prosecuting these and other violations and abuses against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction. We welcome the fact that several individuals who are alleged to have committed such crimes have been brought to justice.

I would also like to pick up on what previous speakers said about the Security Council's work on children and armed conflict having an impact on the ground. The implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) has generated progress, which has resulted in the release of children and their reintegration back into their families and communities. We believe that inclusive community-based programming is central to the success of children's reintegration. It is also clear that we need to promote a broad-based approach to this problem: we need to deal with development, humanitarian, security and human rights issues together.

My Government is encouraged by the work carried out by the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We welcome the resulting information reported to the Security Council in specific situations. Children's participation is fundamental to making monitoring and reporting more effective, and we hope, in this respect, that the monitoring and reporting mechanism can be made more accessible to children. We believe we can achieve this by involving children in its design and implementation at the country level.

We would like to use this occasion to urge all members of the Security Council to continue to cooperate fully within the Working Group and to ensure that the Group continues to adopt concrete conclusions and to propose effective recommendations for consideration and, where appropriate, implementation by the Security Council, including through the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and with respect to political issues.

The United Kingdom strongly believes that the Security Council and its Working Group should make full use of the range of options available for addressing systematic violations; these are set out in resolution 1612 (2005) and in the Working Group's tool kit. Monitoring of the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations is also vital.

Finally, the international community must be prepared to take action against those individuals and groups who commit egregious violations and refuse to undertake the remedial action we demand of them. The Working Group of the Council is an important tool at our disposal, one that could be extremely effective. Let us aim to use it that way, with the goal of making a real difference to the lives not just of individual children but of large groups of them in all the countries affected.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, Sir, may I extend a welcome to you in the Council and express the honour and satisfaction we feel at seeing you chairing this important debate, the theme of which is of great significance to us. Likewise, we wish to acknowledge the Secretary-General's contribution and those of the other staff members who have addressed us. We also acknowledge and appreciate the role that they play in dealing with the question of children and armed conflict.

Including the item of children and armed conflict on the Council's agenda reflects a clear evolution in what we nowadays define as a threat to peace. Beyond that, the work of the Council on the issue has made it possible to raise the world's awareness of the plight of children in situations of armed conflict and their rights in such situations.

However, the Council has dedicated its work almost exclusively to six grave violations and their respective recommendations, when the issue should, in fact, be viewed more broadly without divorcing the rights of children in armed conflict from the rights of all children in general. The Council and its Working Group must examine the issue in depth, lest we squander an entire generation and jeopardize those that follow.

Panama views with enormous concern the fact that, notwithstanding the headway made in international standards on the protection of the rights of the child, those children continue to be deprived of their rights during armed conflicts, in which they are compelled to take part or become victims of unspeakable atrocities. Those children are deprived of the opportunity to enjoy the most sacred treasures of childhood, namely, a future and hope, and their frustration and despair are such that violence and the resurgence of conflict inevitably ensue.

That trend is especially manifest in children displaced by conflict. Unlike refugees, they are bereft of any international legal status, and consequently there is no guardianship of their rights if the institutions of the State do not have the necessary resources to protect them. Therefore, it is imperative to create reintegration programmes and policies with a special emphasis on the status of children as subjects of law, on the specific needs of victims and the education of the communities, with a view to forgiving child soldiers and reintegrating them into their societies.

The international community must tackle even more urgently a global situation that makes the effects of conflict on vulnerable populations even more adverse. The food crisis today threatens to exacerbate the already meagre levels of child nutrition. The United Nations, standing for the citizenry of the world, must set itself up as the prime advocate in redressing that gap. Its success will depend on the coordination amongst its own bodies, agencies and funds, as well as cooperation with Governments, non-governmental organizations and the efforts of local communities.

It is difficult to broach the question of children and armed conflict without referring to the necessity of putting an end to impunity. My delegation reiterates its support for the efforts of the International Criminal Court to bring to justice all those who perpetrate grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, in particular the rights of the child.

Furthermore, Panama considers that in situations of armed conflict, for which there are sanctions committees, this Council should add to the list of individuals subject to sanctions those guilty of grave violations against the rights of the child.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): The Council has addressed the issue of children in armed conflict on a number of occasions. Today's debate, for which I would like to thank the President, is a timely occasion to take stock of the work accomplished by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established under resolution 1612 (2005).

Belgium aligns itself with the statement made by my French colleague speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) leads me to place particular emphasis on the fight against impunity, an aspect that was addressed in the statement made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as by other speakers.

Mr. President, as you have noted in your concept paper, the issue of children in armed conflict requires a multidimensional approach. Our delegation has often underscored the fact that this is not only a human rights, humanitarian or development aid issue, but also an issue concerning peace and security. The Council Working Group has made it possible to carry out structural monitoring of all conflict situations where children are being recruited or used by armed forces or groups.

The Working Group's annual report gives us a very comprehensive overview of the range of activities that the Group has undertaken. In that context, it is important that we recall the need to provide the Working Group with the necessary support so as to enable it to continue to pursue its activities in an effective, transparent and efficient manner.

Belgium has always favoured an approach based on dialogue and partnership, but the situation in the field must change first. The operational conclusions adopted by the Working Group serve as an important tool in assisting and calling on the parties to conflict to put an end to child recruitment and to the serious violations perpetrated against children. In the absence of any positive response from the relevant parties, the Council must shoulder its responsibilities and adopt targeted sanction measures.

We must acknowledge that, in spite of the numerous appeals launched by the international community and the repeated commitments made by States, the number of children affected by armed conflict remains alarmingly high. In that regard, the fight against impunity must remain our guiding principle. If we wish to eradicate the practice, all individuals guilty of committing crimes against children must be tried and sentenced, as it is only through systematic sentencing and bringing to justice of perpetrators that we will be able to change mentalities and put an end to the suffering of children affected by armed conflict.

With the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the international community now has available to it adequate legal instruments to try and punish the most serious crimes that have been committed, in particular against children. The International Criminal Court will also make it possible to ensure that those individuals who are involved in recruitment and enlistment of children are no longer able to do so. Celebrating the adoption of the Rome Statute of the ICC today, we must recall the primordial role that the Court can play in fighting impunity and preventing those intolerable practices.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to thank the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. I would like to thank you, Sir, for personally chairing it.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by our French colleague on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make some comments in my national capacity.

Croatia welcomes the strengthened engagement of the Security Council in addressing violations against children in armed conflict. The establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) and the creation of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict have raised the profile of children affected by armed conflict to the international level and have undoubtedly contributed to the reduction in the recruitment of children by parties to conflict. We commend the efforts and achievements of the Working Group, which is efficiently chaired by French Ambassador Ripert.

However, resolution 1612 (2005) also deals with a further five grave violations against children that have not been adequately addressed in the mechanisms to which I have referred. There needs to be an extension of the application of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms to include all six grave violations in all situations identified in both annexes contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757).

Another positive development was the recent adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), which demands the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians, with immediate effect. That resolution should contribute significantly to the safety of children in armed conflict. The scope of its impact will be evident by 30 June 2009, by which time the Secretary-General has been requested to submit a report to the Council on its implementation.

In spite of the positive achievements by the United Nations system and the international community as a whole, the situation on the ground demands continued and stronger Security Council action in order to ensure that all parties to armed conflict act in compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Council and other international instruments developed to protect children in armed conflict.

In order to contribute to a long-term and sustained solution to the issues of children in armed conflict, the United Nations and the international community at large must ensure that adequate resources and funding are available to support national strategies or action plans in the area of child protection and welfare, as well as community-based programmes. As reported by various non-governmental organizations, the latter is the key to the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers.

Successful reintegration requires long-term, adequate and sufficient funding of community-based programmes in order to prevent recruitment, child prostitution, stigma, discrimination and involvement in criminal activities. Moreover, children should be allowed access to benefits without having to identify themselves as ex-child soldiers, since many children are associated with armed forces and groups in other equally harmful ways.

By giving children education and skills training in the areas that a community needs, we will help them to become constructive members of those communities, which will hopefully more readily accept and value them in the future. By giving all children affected by armed conflict access to those beneficial programmes, there will be less likelihood of resentment against former child soldiers and those associated with armed forces and groups.

Croatia strongly supports the work of child protection advisers throughout all Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department for Political Affairs missions, as well as United Nations mission personnel guarding camps for displaced persons. As the report of the Secretary-General points out, it has become evident that such camps have become recruiting grounds for child soldiers.

The Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups represent the latest policy on that issue. Croatia believes that they in particular deserve to be internationally recognized and universally applied. We urge all parties to armed conflict to stop using child soldiers and to start acting in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, including the Paris Principles.

We urge Governments to end impunity for perpetrators accused of committing violations against children in armed conflict. We believe that there is a need to refer those violations to the International Criminal Court in cases where national systems fail to address them, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the programmatic response to the release, rehabilitation and reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and armed groups, the Security Council and the international community as a whole need to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention that addresses the root cause of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner. By promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights, we will ensure the protection of children on a long-term basis. We will ensure that they have a future.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for coming to New York to preside over this meeting. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy and UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman for their briefings.

China is deeply concerned about violations committed against children in armed conflicts in some countries. China opposes the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other violations of the rights and interests of children in armed conflict. We support the various efforts of the United Nations, including those of the Security Council, to promote the protection of children in armed conflict. I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize the following.

First, the Security Council should stay focused on its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Armed conflict inevitably hurts and affects children and other vulnerable groups. By working to prevent, reduce or resolve conflicts at the grassroots level, the Security Council will be able to provide children with the best protection it can. That is far more meaningful and effective than remedial measures taken in the aftermath of conflict. A look at reality this year shows that, while many children in Afghanistan and other regions have become the victims of armed conflict as a result of the deterioration of the security situation, positive progress in the peace processes in Côte d'Ivoire and other regions has brought hope to children there. That is yet further proof of the need for the Security Council to pay more attention to the issue of armed conflict per se.

Secondly, in addressing the issue of children and armed conflict, the role of the Government concerned should always be respected and supported. Resolution 1612 (2005) stresses the primary responsibility of the Government concerned for the protection of children and the need for other parties to cooperate with the Government in its efforts. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should increase communication with the Governments concerned, acknowledge and support its positive measures and continue to enhance mutual confidence so as to avoid politicizing the question of children and interfering in the internal affairs of the countries concerned under the pretext of protecting children. The Secretariat should also strengthen communication and cooperation with the Governments concerned to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of its information and to improve the quality of its reports.

Thirdly, continued efforts are needed to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the proceedings of the Working Group on the basis of resolution 1612 (2005). Progress has been made with regard to collecting information since the monitoring and reporting mechanism went into operation.

However, in many countries and regions the mechanism is still in its initial stage and need to be constantly improved in practice. Impatience and haste should therefore be avoided. Under the coordination of France as its chair, the Working Group has considered the question of children in a number of countries. The Chinese delegation hopes that the Working Group, with continued professionalism and objectivity, will be able to find solutions to the relevant issues through cooperation with the Governments concerned and constructive consultations, and put forward useful proposals to the Security Council. The Chinese delegation supports the Working Group in its continued efforts to consider its working methods in order to improve its efficiency and transparency.

China is always opposed to the wilful use or threat of sanctions by the Security Council and believes that the issue of sanctions should be approached with even greater caution when it comes to the question of children and armed conflict. Situations vary from conflict to conflict and cannot all be treated alike or addressed with a one-size-fits-all approach. The Chinese delegation once again calls upon all parties to armed conflict to truly honour their obligations, comply with international humanitarian law and respect and protect the rights of children. In promoting post-conflict reconstruction, the international community should give priority to the reintegration of children into their families, schools and communities and provide sufficient resources to guarantee the achievement of that goal.

Efforts by the Security Council alone are not enough to resolve the question of children and armed conflict. We encourage UNICEF, the World Bank and other international agencies to play a greater role in helping the countries concerned to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict. We also welcome the positive role played by non-governmental organizations in that regard.

Having ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, China is now a party to the Protocol. We call for the ratification of and accession to the Protocol by more countries. It is our hope that all parties will make efforts to truly improve the situation of children in armed conflict and give them the beautiful future that they deserve.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Allow me first to join others in thanking Viet Nam, our fellow Association of Southeast Asian Nations member, for initiating this very important meeting. We are pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this debate and we are certain that, under your able stewardship, this meeting will arrive at a successful outcome.

We also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Mullet, Executive Director Veneman and Ms. Hunt for their respective important statements. My delegation would also like to express our support for Ambassador Ripert of France, Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, for his statement and his leadership of the Working Group.

The issue that brings us together today is an essential tragedy of conflict situations — the tragedy of the youngest victims. From Palestine to Iraq, from Afghanistan to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, children are casualties and victims of war. The plight of children in armed conflict continues to grip this Council.

With thousands of children bearing arms as child soldiers and countless others thought to be affected in other ways, children also suffer from the spread of diseases and underdevelopment in armed conflicts. While thousands of children die every year in direct fighting, malnutrition and disease also claim many lives. Efforts to protect former child soldiers and child victims should therefore be conducted beyond the framework of security or rights-based issues. Indonesia has been steadfast in its position that this issue should also be discussed within the framework of the social, economic and development frameworks.

Often separated from their families and living in the squalid conditions in war zones, those children are greatly in need of psychological as well as physical intervention. Childhood, then, becomes a nightmare in which they are separated from parents and family, their homes are destroyed, health and education services are disrupted and trust is undermined. Watching parents being murdered, raped or tortured or being threatened themselves puts extreme pressure on children's' coping mechanisms, manifesting in extreme anxiety and insomnia and difficulty functioning in school or depression.

The international donor community must therefore continue to provide long-term and sustainable assistance to facilitate the full recovery of children. Such assistance should and must be provided without political preconditions. Wherever and whenever there are children affected by armed conflict, we should devote our full energy and passion to assisting them. Our political aspirations and ideological differences should not prevent the attainment of our common objective.

Such assistance will require an approach that includes development and humanitarian dimensions, undergirded by the political will of States. In that regard, the United Nations Development Programme and its development partners, as well as UNICEF and the World Health Organization, must be continuously engaged to increase their development and humanitarian initiatives that help countries in need.

With the growing complexity and intricacy of world affairs, the United Nations is surely not in a position to tackle the entirety of the issue of protection of children. We therefore recognize the pivotal role that can be provided by regional organizations in addressing the multifaceted aspects of the issue. In addition, we also welcome and commend the increasing role of non-governmental organizations, such as the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, and other civil society organizations.

However, we strongly believe that the best protection from armed conflict is in preventing it and addressing its sources at their roots. That should be done in the context of peace processes, as stipulated by resolution 1612 (2005). Thus the Security Council, as mandated by the Charter, must continuously promote peace processes so that those children can be protected.

As a newly established body, the Working Group must continue to update, refine and strengthen its working methods. For that reason, we cannot but commend the efforts of the Working Group to improve its working methods in order to maintain its impartiality, transparency, accountability, inclusivity and constructive cooperation with the countries concerned.

In addition, the Working Group should provide clear guidelines on how to define a clear strategy for countries or parties to be de-listed from the annexes. While demands to parties to armed conflict must be fully monitored and reported, it is equally pertinent that clear, objective and measurable guidelines be in place.

Finally, let us not, as Special Representative Coomaraswamy has said, allow children to be the forgotten and neglected victims of the fighting and put future generations at risk. Let us work towards a world in which there is more humanity, more caring and more gentleness and in which children are valued and protected, starting here with this Council and its initiatives. To conclude, allow me to therefore assure the Council of our full support for the adoption of the draft presidential statement on this very important matter.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My first words will be simply to warmly welcome you, Sir. Allow me also to thank you for having proposed this debate on an issue that, although it has been discussed recently, nonetheless remains an urgent and timely topic.

The regular consideration of this issue bears witness to the vigilance and earnestness with which the Council, in conjunction with the international community, addresses that grave scourge. It is obvious that, without that collective commitment on our part, the scourge will continue to wreak havoc around the globe through its frightening manifestations, including the abduction, recruitment and enrolment of children; attacks against schools; and above all sexual violence against children, particular rape, which has reached very disturbing proportions; not to mention the other aspects of a humanitarian nature and the very adverse impact that this problem has on development.

The situation of children in armed conflict first requires the recognition that children's rights need to be protected. States bear paramount responsibility for that protection, followed, according to the same duties and obligations, by the other parties to the conflict.

It is therefore essential to invest the bulk of our efforts towards inculcating the rule of law and bolstering democratic institutions. Since those norms effectively place human beings, as well as respect for human values, at the heart of society, the rights of the child are already guaranteed in a democratic system. That is why all States are duty-bound to become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

The contributions of United Nations agencies and other partners operating in the field are also necessary. To that end, we would encourage the popularization of international humanitarian law and educational outreach regarding the rights of the child, with a view to creating an environment conducive to the well-being and prosperity of children. However, as Ms. Veneman, the Executive Director of UNICEF, so rightly said, the best way to protect children from armed conflict is to prevent war itself, which is our collective responsibility.

Although the prospects of totally eradicating that scourge affecting child soldiers are still remote, we hope to achieve the objectives of resolution 1612 (2005). The results already obtained, such as the implementation of action plans, the prosecution before competent courts of commanders who enlist children, the reduction and even cessation of child recruitment in certain cases, the release and reintegration of children into their communities are, from that standpoint, extremely encouraging. With respect to that problem, we take this opportunity to congratulate Côte d'Ivoire and Sri Lanka on the example that they have set in this field.

We invite armed groups and forces, the names of which appear in the annex of the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757), to demobilize children in their ranks and to facilitate their reintegration into their respective communities and families.

The best guarantee of successful reintegration would be the adoption of measures to prevent any recurrence of the problem through appropriate education and the training of these children in income-generating activity with a view to making them independent once and for all. Such action can be carried out, however, only if it is firmly supported, particularly by donors and all national and international structures with competencies in this field.

To conclude, I wish to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Chairperson of the Watchlist Steering Committee, the entire United Nations system, the donors and France, naturally, as well as the Working Group it chairs, for their leadership, their constant efforts and their commitment to this titanic endeavour.

Finally, I would like to say that we have taken note of the draft presidential statement. Once we have seen it, we will have the chance consider it and, without a doubt, to support it wholeheartedly.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this debate. We also thank Ambassador Ripert, the Permanent Representative of France and Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for the presentation of the Working Group's annual report. We also thank his delegation for its work and devotion to the issue before us, as well as for the leadership role that France has played.

We are also grateful for the comments made by the Secretary-General, by Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Director of UNICEF and Ms. Hunt.

Armed conflicts are a fertile breeding ground for the violation of each and every one of children's rights. To date, we have focused on the direct consequences of those conflicts on childhood. However, in the future we must work just as effectively to combat other violations of their rights. We must pay closer attention to the indirect consequences of conflicts, the harmful effects of which often grow into major obstacles that thwart the promise of a better future, even in a post-conflict period.

The timely convening of this debate allows us to repeat our call for a review of the criteria of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. That would allow us to consider, in a more appropriate and efficient manner, each of the six grave violations identified in resolution 1612 (2005).

The recent progress made by the Council on issues such as sexual violence, as enshrined in the landmark resolution 1820 (2008), should be adequately reflected in the approach that the Working Group applies to the issue. It is also crucial that we work very closely with the affected States in order resolutely to combat impunity. To that end, the Security Council should carry out an in-depth analysis of the actions and sanctions that it could apply to those who continue to recruit children and to commit other crimes against children.

Today, as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the time is right to also consider the complementary role that the

International Criminal Court can play in supporting States in their fight against impunity.

During the debate held on this issue in February, we expressed our commitment to addressing the numerous consequences of armed conflict on children, and we agreed on the need to address the root causes of such conflict through a broad and comprehensive preventive strategy.

Today, we agree with you, Sir, that the United Nations should more fully tackle the problem of children and armed conflict. It should implement a broader protection strategy. The loss of basic services, such as access to drinking water, sanitation, health care and education, as well as the rise in child mortality, illiteracy and malnutrition, to name just a few, perpetuate the vicious circle, which then becomes the cause and consequence of conflicts. We have continually warned that global inequity and our neglect of the extreme poverty in which one fifth of humankind currently lives are factors that largely contribute towards creating a fertile breeding ground for conflict. That lack of equity and neglect of situations of poverty are also factors that punish children in particular.

The reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed groups should be an indispensable component of that broader protection strategy, in particular in those cases where the marginalization of certain groups is a factor contributing to conflict.

The reintegration process should help children to establish new foundations in their lives and should restore the opportunities snatched away from them by conflict for their physical, emotional and intellectual development. A truly effective integration and rehabilitation process should be inclusive, community-based and designed to help rebuild emotional trust between children and their families and to promote peace, security and stability in their communities, preventing ostracism and the stigmatization of those who have been the victims of child recruitment.

It is essential to provide educational and vocational opportunities in order to prevent former child soldiers from being re-recruited, as occurs with some frequency. The new educational and vocational opportunities must ensure greater socio-economic well-being for the family. Particularly for children who have been removed from armed groups, education in times of conflict is much more than a path towards employment, as it is aimed at normalizing their lives and helping them to develop a new identity, separate from that of child soldiers.

The challenge for us all is not only to put a definitive end to child recruitment and other grave violations, but also and above all to channel children's energies, ideas and dreams in a positive way that can contribute to the creation of a new post-conflict society.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to thank you, Sir, for convening and personally presiding over this open debate on children and armed conflict. We would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy; the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman; and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Edmond Mullet, for their excellent presentations.

Despite the efforts made over the past six months at the regional and international levels, with the leading role played by the United Nations, we have yet to see tangible progress regarding the situation of children in armed conflict. Children continue to be recruited and sometimes re-recruited as combatants, and boys and girls continue to fall victim to acts of violation, rape, murder, maiming and arbitrary detention committed by parties to conflict in various regions, despite the repeated appeals made to those parties by the Security Council and the General Assembly to abide by the rules established under international law and the Geneva Conventions.

We are concerned by the persistent phenomenon of the recruitment and re-recruitment of child soldiers in situations of armed conflict. Despite the statements made by many parties to conflict reaffirming their commitment to establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, cooperation to that end has been insufficient. Therefore, we must urge all parties concerned to prevent child recruitment, to release all recruited children and to ensure their reintegration through appropriate development programmes. We call on the international financial institutions and donors to fund such programmes in countries affected by or emerging from conflict so that they can reintegrate those children by providing them with regular incomes, thus preventing their re-recruitment.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, my country deplores the fact that, in some countries affected by armed conflict, all too many children are subjected to rape or sexual harassment by parties to the conflicts and even by personnel of peacekeeping operations. In that connection, my country supports the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations regarding acts of sexual violence. Once they have been found guilty of such heinous acts, the perpetrators must be punished. My delegation urges all countries to enforce their national laws criminalizing such practices and to combat and put an end to impunity.

Libya wishes to express its deep concern about the children suffering in the occupied Palestinian territories. In recent years, Israeli military operations have claimed the lives of more than 800 Palestinian children. Thousands have been displaced by the destruction of their families' homes. Palestinian children have also been affected by the racist separation wall built in the occupied territory, which has prevented thousands of them from attending school. As for Gaza, which is in a state of siege, its suffering is indescribable.

We must also recall the suffering of children in Iraq and Afghanistan. In a number of press statements, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has described the tragic situation that continues to face the children in those countries, including the fact that many have been killed or maimed as a result of car bombs, explosive belts, improvised explosive devices or bombings of schools and hospitals in occupied areas. In addition, many children are subject to arbitrary detention and deprived of their most fundamental rights, including the right to education and freedom of movement. Such acts are illegal, and we call on the coalition forces to rectify them and to release those children unconditionally.

In conclusion, we wish to thank the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for all its efforts to address issues related to children in situations of armed conflict. We hope that the Working Group will refrain from taking a selective approach and from politicization in formulating its recommendations. We would like to take this opportunity to draw the Council's attention to the remarkable role played by UNICEF in protecting children, not only in conflict areas, but also in countries requiring food and development assistance.

Finally, Sir, we would like to thank your country once again. We shall support the draft presidential statement to be issued at the close of this meeting.

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome you, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, to the presidency of the Security Council. We are grateful to our friends and colleagues from the Vietnamese delegation for the painstaking preparation of this meeting and the arduous work that they have performed in this regard. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his participation in this important meeting. We are also grateful to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Mullet, Ms. Veneman and Ms. Hunt for the timely information they have provided and welcome their activities in trying to shield children from the horrors of war. We pay tribute to the selflessness and personal courage of both the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who has carried out productive visits to hot spots, and the UNICEF staff and other humanitarian personnel working in such places on a permanent basis.

The Russian Federation views the securing of the rights of children as a priority and is actively working to that end. On 26 June of this year, the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Dmitry Medvedev, signed a law on the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to the involvement of children in armed conflict. This step was a further demonstration of Russia's commitment to strict compliance with international legal norms and standards and of our own meaningful contribution to the United Nations campaign to widen the scale of the obligations States sign on to in the human rights and humanitarian fields.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is nearing universal ratification, and its Optional Protocols are important international instruments in the field of protection of children, including in the context of armed conflict. We enjoin those States that have not yet acceded to them to do so as a matter of urgency.

The task of protecting children in conflicts and securing their normal life in the post-conflict period is system-wide in nature and needs a consolidated approach on the part of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its functional committees alike. This issue must be the focus of attention of human rights treaty bodies, first and foremost, the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

It is important not only to tackle the tragic consequences of conflict but also to direct efforts at preventing them. An important factor in this regard is the achievement of harmony between civilizations and the eradication of extremism in whatever soil it may spring from.

We restate our support for the Secretary-General's appeal to pay due attention to all serious violations of the rights of children in conflicts, including not only the use of child soldiers, but the remaining five categories of violations as well. We feel that such crimes should not remain unpunished. We feel that the killing and maiming of minors may stand alongside their recruitment as a criterion for including parties to armed conflict in the well-known annexes to the Secretary-General's reports on this issue.

Specific long-term measures must be adopted to rehabilitate the afflicted children and to reintegrate them into society. It is extremely important in this regard to create the conditions for children and young people to receive a continuous and full-fledged education as well as for children to have access to comprehensive medical care.

Resolution 1612 (2005) is an important benchmark for practical work to protect children. In order to ensure that this activity is of high quality, it is necessary for the monitoring and reporting mechanism to function to the full in all situations that give rise to concern, first and foremost those on the Security Council agenda, and for it to provide to the Council up-to-date, objective and reliable information. We approve the report of the Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (S/2008/455), and we welcome the readiness of the Group to improve its working methods in order to enhance its effectiveness and impartiality.

We share the concern of United Nations bodies, the Secretariat management and its specialized units with respect to the deteriorating situation of children in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unlike a number of other situations, the suffering of children in these conflicts does not receive proper attention by the Security Council and other United Nations bodies and does not elicit appropriate measures from them. We are convinced of the need for the swiftest deployment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in those countries. We stress the responsibility of all parties, including the multinational forces, to ensure the safety of the civilian populations, first and foremost children, as well as strict compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law. We resolutely condemn the killing and maiming of children, where as the result of premeditated attacks or as a result of indiscriminate and excessive use of force. We feel that it is unacceptable for hundreds of children to continue to be held in the military prisons of multinational forces on arbitrary charges and without access to civil justice. A number of other delegations have already referred to this situation as well.

It is impossible to secure the protection of children without cooperation from the Governments of countries in the grip of the conflicts or at the stage of post-conflict restoration. The United Nations and its Security Council must steer the international community towards providing meaningful support, first and foremost financial, for national measures to bolster this protection, to effectively implement demobilization and reintegration programmes for minors, and to create the socio-economic and legal conditions for prevention of recruitment of children and other crimes against them.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We too commend the delegation of Viet Nam for organizing this open thematic debate on children and armed conflict. We particularly wish to thank the Deputy Prime Minister for coming to New York to preside over our meeting today. We thank all those who have participated earlier on in this debate, but we particularly wish to highlight the efforts of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and thank her for the work that she has been doing for children around the world.

In 1996, Graçà Machel compiled the first report on children affected by armed conflict (A/51/306.Add.1). Since the release of her report, significant progress has been made in the development of international legal and policy frameworks for the protection of children in armed conflict. Of importance are the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Statute of the International Criminal Court and Security Council resolutions that address the issue of children and armed conflict thematically or in country-specific situations. In addition, the 2007 Paris Commitments to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups provides a children's rights approach to programming.

Despite these developments, children remain the worst affected population group, since parties to armed conflict continue to commit egregious violations against them. The Security Council has identified six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict that my delegation believes require equal weight and attention by the Council. These six violations are the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children, and attacks on schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict.

There is still much to be done to protect children from these grave violations. However, we are encouraged by the fact that the active involvement of the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict has been translated into concrete results. Today, a number of parties to armed conflict, though not many, have formal action plans in place to halt recruitment and identify and release children from their forces. We remain optimistic that more action plans might be prepared in the coming months.

Efforts to include specific provisions relating to children in peace processes and agreements are beginning to gain momentum. It is important that provisions such as the release of children and reintegration into their communities be included at all stages of peace negotiations and in the final documents of peace agreements. The incorporation of child protection requirements in United Nations peacekeeping mandates, including through the appointment of child-protection advisers, has become more systematic.

Since 2005, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has reviewed reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and made recommendations to the Council that have yielded some positive results on the ground. The Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, has been actively involved in eliciting concrete child protection commitments through her engagement with Governments, parties to conflict, United Nations partners and the international community. Her efforts are to be commended.

It is vital that we not forget the long-term needs of children that have been affected by armed conflict. Ensuring the well-being of those children is an ongoing process and therefore more attention should be paid to the reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed forces and groups. Successful reintegration requires the participation of children themselves and their communities. Children identify safety, acceptance, being valued and having a future as central to their reintegration.

Furthermore, children identify education, skills training and equipping themselves to be constructive members of their community as essential for their continuing welfare. Successful reintegration is also dependent on the promotion of sustainable development and poverty eradication. In that regard, the international community should provide early support for economic growth in post-conflict situations and continue to provide resources for reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, as well as social services such as education and health care. Such assistance would ensure that children who have left armed forces and groups do not become re-recruited, but have a chance for a dignified future.

Lastly, special consideration of girls is needed when developing programmes for children associated with armed forces and groups. Girls often experience gender-based violence and discrimination during their recruitment or use and within communities to which they return. Therefore, it is important that reintegration and rehabilitation programmes include measures to address all forms of violence and discrimination against girls. United Nations agencies and civil society organizations on the ground should continue to make every effort to assist authorities to find and help such girls. Through such concerted efforts, we would ensure a better life for all children who have been affected by armed conflict.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I thank you, Sir, for convening

this open debate on children and armed conflict and for the concise concept paper circulated by your delegation. I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and illuminating reports on that subject. I also commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Edmund Mullet, Ann Veneman and Kathleen Hunt for their instructive and very candid briefings.

Nigeria considers the protection of children in armed conflict to be one of the most daunting humanitarian and security challenges facing the international community today. Despite stronger global action and reported progress in Côte d'Ivoire and, to a lesser extent, in Nepal, the Secretary-General noted in his recent reports the continued recruitment of child soldiers and grave violations against children, including killing, maiming, rape and the denial of humanitarian access. He also drew attention not only to the manipulation and coercion of children to participate in political demonstrations, strikes and roadblocks, but also to the increasing cross-border recruitment of children.

Nigeria finds that state of affairs intolerable and thus lends it full support to the country- or case-specific recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's latest reports on children and armed conflicts in Nepal, Somalia and Uganda. Nigeria believes that that those targeted measures would strengthen the implementation of existing norms and legal frameworks, while reinforcing the advocating and monitoring mechanisms on children in armed conflict. We therefore urge the parties to which those recommendations are addressed to fully implement them.

In lending our voice to the Secretary-General's targeted measures, Nigeria believes that political will and a firm commitment to the implementation of peace agreements are crucial to moving the child protection agenda forward, especially in Africa. As regards Somalia, we encourage the Government and factions in the country to commit fully to the implementation of the peace agreement signed on 9 June in Djibouti. Particularly, we encourage them to implement the recommendation that calls for an end to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and support the call on the Council to deploy a more robust peacekeeping force to the country to restore stability.

Regarding the need to ensure the rights and needs of all children, I would like to make five points..

First, Nigeria calls for a development-oriented approach to children and armed conflict. Such an approach would require greater attention to be paid to child-focused health care needs, rehabilitative care, education and the empowerment of women, families and communities to provide a secure environment for children.

Secondly, good governance, democracy and conflict prevention are vital to building a culture of peace and respect for human rights, including children's rights. My delegation therefore calls for the implementation of existing conflict prevention mechanisms in Africa to free resources for human and social development. Additionally, children's rights should be at the core of humanitarian, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

Thirdly, Nigeria calls on the Council to strengthen and expand the scope of the existing monitoring and reporting mechanism and to take targeted measures against perpetrators who repeatedly violate children's rights.

Fourthly, Nigeria fully supports the role of the International Criminal Court in investigating and prosecuting such violations.

Fifthly, we call for greater collaboration between the African Union Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Council's Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, and for the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and African civil society in monitoring children's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations.

As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991 and to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child since 2001, Nigeria believes that the need for the enhancement of collaborative efforts among the various international and regional frameworks for the protection of children in armed conflict ,can never be overemphasized. National programmes are nonetheless imperative. We have, through the Nigerian Child Rights Act, made remarkable progress in the implementation of international frameworks.

Children represent our collective posterity. Nigeria believes that it is incumbent on us to protect them. It is also our Charter obligation to do so.

Ensuring the rights and needs of children, not just the rights of child soldiers, requires the involvement of all Governments, international agencies and civil society actors.

Let me conclude by thanking the Working Group for the work it has done and by indicating the full support of the Nigerian delegation for the draft presidential statement on children and armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to commend you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate on children and armed conflict. Peru is pleased to participate in today's meeting and to contribute to efforts to protect children. My delegation welcomes the statements made by the Secretary-General, by Mr. Edmond Mullet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and by Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF. We also welcome the presence of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and we commend her for all her work.

In addressing this issue, we must always remember the pain and suffering of tens of thousands of families ravaged by the many forms of violence that arise in situations of armed conflict and that, among other things, affect one of their key components: their children. The physical and psychological damage that armed conflict continues to do to thousands of children is very difficult if not impossible to repair. For that reason, Peru again forcefully condemns all acts of violence against children, especially those linked to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, abduction, maiming, killing, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as to the impeding of humanitarian access and to attacks against schools, hospitals and centres for refugees and internally displaced persons — all of which affect children.

It is the responsibility of every State affected by violence to prevent such suffering by children and to endeavour to reduce the number of victims to the lowest possible level. Peru firmly believes that States, especially those affected by armed conflict, should continue to adopt measures within their respective legal systems to try those responsible for the recruitment and use of children in conflict and other serious crimes against children. Amnesty and impunity are unacceptable. In that regard, the work of international judicial bodies, in particular the International Criminal Court and special courts such as that created for Sierra Leone, is important.

The United Nations system and other international and regional organizations should cooperate with national efforts to prevent the violation of the human rights of minors and to provide support for victims. Significant steps have been taken in that regard, notably through the establishment of a variety of international mechanisms and instruments to put an end to violations of the human rights of children involved in armed conflict. But much remains to be done.

For its part, the Security Council should continue to develop and improve the ways and means at its disposal to prevent conflict situations that affect international peace and security from violating the rights of children. Here, it is important to continue working to ensure full compliance with resolution 1612 (2005). The Council should also continue to draw on the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We call on all parties involved to continue and, as necessary, to enhance their cooperation with those mechanisms.

My delegation supports the possibility of the Security Council using targeted sanctions against those who violate international law with respect to children and armed conflict. In that regard, it is important to map out the process that would lead to the imposition of such sanctions.

My delegation reaffirms its support for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his most recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) and calls on the Security Council and other bodies concerned to adopt them. Specifically, we agree with the Secretary-General that the Security Council should give equal weight to all categories of grave violations arising during armed conflict, not only the recruitment and use of child soldiers. My delegation will support any initiative in that regard.

We have seen in practice that there are limits on the demobilization of children in the midst of an armed conflict. But we know that when a conflict ends the recruitment and use of child soldiers also ends. We should therefore focus on the cessation of hostilities and the search for peaceful solutions as a direct way to prevent the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict. The will of the parties to attain a viable and sustainable peace agreement is thus vital. The cases of Côte d'Ivoire and Nepal provide examples in that regard.

To guarantee sustainable peace we must tackle the causes of conflict. In many situations, these are closely linked to hunger, poverty and social exclusion. Policies aimed at sustainable development must therefore be the foundation of any process of peacebuilding. Moreover, it is important that the donor community provide long-term sustainable support for national efforts to ensure the disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers, along with the rehabilitation of children who did not participate in the conflict but were victims of it. Moreover, owing to their particular vulnerability and needs, it is necessary to focus particular attention on girls affected by armed conflict.

The future of our countries depends on our care and handling of the safety and security of our children. We firmly believe that, in pursuit of that objective, the prevention and eradication of armed conflict will guarantee lasting international peace and security based on respect for human rights, the rule of law, democracy, national reconciliation and sustainable development policies that will eliminate hunger and poverty and will address the structural causes that lie at the root of such conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate. Australia remains deeply concerned about the plight of children affected by armed conflicts, and we remain dedicated to ensuring the protection of all children from harm and exploitation.

We welcome Council's adoption on 19 June of resolution 1820 (2008), recognizing that children in situations of armed conflict are vulnerable not only to recruitment as child soldiers but also to other grave violations, including rape and other acts of sexual violence. We echo the call in that resolution for all States to comply with their obligations regarding prosecuting persons responsible for acts of sexual violence.

Children in armed conflict and children displaced by conflict are vulnerable, as noted, not only to recruitment as child soldiers but also to other grave violations, including killing and maiming, abductions and attacks on schools and hospitals. They may also suffer as a result of the denial of humanitarian access. The United Nations system must continue to coordinate its efforts to address all these egregious violations, and monitoring and reporting mechanisms should be triggered when any of them occur.

Many of the parties who commit violations against children in situations of armed conflict have been cited repeatedly in reports of the Secretary-General. We encourage the Security Council to continue to call on relevant States to prepare time-bound action plans to stop violations against children and to consider targeted measures which may be taken against those persistent violators of child rights. On the tenth anniversary of its creation by the adoption of the Rome Statute, we also stress the important role of the International Criminal Court in investigating and prosecuting violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her continued commitment to her mandate, and we welcome her recent efforts to shed light on the situation of children in Afghanistan. We encourage the Council to maintain attention and seek further progress on those areas where children continue to be affected by armed conflict, including in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

Australia welcomes the progress made on the issue and encourages all key stakeholders to continue their efforts to ensure that all children are protected from harm and exploitation and to hold those who would abuse them to account.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. Sri Lanka is particularly pleased to take the floor on this important issue under the guidance of the delegation of Viet Nam.

This meeting provides an opportunity to refocus our efforts in addressing the scourge of the recruitment and use of child combatants. The reports of the

Secretary-General on specific situations, as well as his annual report (S/2007/757), are informative and illustrative in that regard.

This debate takes place three years after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). The journey between that event and today has been marked by the establishment of monitoring and reporting task forces, the evaluation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the adoption of the Paris Principles and Commitments and the 10-year review of the Graça Machel report (A/51/306). Those initiatives, together with the relevant international instruments, have helped strengthen the protection framework for children in armed conflict in its practical and normative aspects.

However, the threat of the recruitment and use of child combatants continues unabated and remains the primary concern. Therefore, current efforts in the Council in taking measures against persistent perpetrators of such crimes need to be intensified in a more realistic, practical and effective manner.

In that regard, Sri Lanka compliments the efforts made so far by the Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in recalibrating the monitoring and reporting mechanism. It is our hope that those efforts and measures adopted by the Working Group will eventually lead to the elimination of the pernicious offence of the recruitment and use of children for armed hostilities.

However, to achieve that end, it is important that the Council and the Working Group, at this point, remain essentially focused on this most urgent task in a more coherent manner and not seek to broaden the canvas to include other issues that are not of immediate practical benefit. Actions that make a difference on the ground should engage our attention in our effort to attain concerted international and national measures to bring perpetrators to justice.

In that context, let me offer some views on the issue on children and armed conflict for the consideration of the Council, the Working Group and the Secretary-General.

First, introducing under the Council mandate other categories and subcategories of violations against children without resolving the core issue of child recruitment would only make the Council process on children and armed conflict seem ineffective by missing the wood for the trees. Instead, the Council could, for instance, address issues more relevant to its work on peace and security, such as how armed actors resort to new tactics of recruitment to defy and mislead the international community, whose attention to the matter is based on existing norms.

We have observed that discernible trend in the north of Sri Lanka, where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) subject schoolchildren to compulsory weapons and combat training with a view to enlisting them for active combat as and when the need arises. That is a new form of recruitment and use of child combatants adopted by the LTTE.

Secondly, it is important to underline that, as distinct from Member States, non-State actors are not bound by internationally enforceable legal instruments and, therefore, should be subjected to stricter scrutiny and more rigorous and internationally enforceable punitive measures so as to make them accountable for grave abuses against children.

Thirdly, since the primary responsibility for the protection of children under national and international legal instruments lies with the State, a zero-tolerance policy on recruitment and the use of children by any party whatsoever assumes greater significance as an obligation of a State. The Government of Sri Lanka has declared and followed such a policy consistently, with the corresponding commitment to address all abuses identified by resolution 1612 (2005) and other relevant national and international legal instruments.

Fourthly, the Council and the Working Group must agree on how to deal with persistent and recalcitrant violators in respect of situations listed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757) and evolve a realistic approach to address the issue. In that regard, we support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report calling for increased pressure against persistent and recalcitrant violators, including through effective targeted measures.

Fifthly, the most important of all the measures that underpin the effective implementation of 1612 (2005) is the reintegration of child combatants. They need special protection after having surrendered to national authorities or having been rescued from armed groups. As the Secretary-General suggests in his report, the successful reintegration of child combatants requires resources as well as expertise. It is imperative, therefore, that current international concern in this important area move beyond words of sympathy into sustained engagement and the flow of necessary resources to facilitate effective reintegration. In that regard, the Paris Principles provide guidance towards a long-term self-sustaining effort that can also lead to peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Sri Lanka remains committed to working closely with the Council and the Working Group to rescue children trapped in situations of armed conflict, in the cause of making the world safer for children. With our rich, long-held tradition of promoting the welfare of children, including the provision of free health care and education from primary to tertiary level, we seek nothing less.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Viet Nam for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank particularly the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her informative statement this morning and for her very effective work in the cause of children affected by armed conflict.

May I also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the Chair of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their contributions today.

The Council has been very committed in building a protection framework for children in situations of armed conflict, a framework resulting from the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) three years ago. Both the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Council's Working Group resulting from resolution 1612 (2005) built upon previous efforts and created important tools to address the grave abuses against children during conflicts. We are making strides. Task forces are active or under way in all situations of concern, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has undertaken numerous visits to almost all situations of concern and the Working Group has considered and issued conclusions on nine different situations.

However, when taking stock of resolution 1612 (2005), we must ask ourselves one fundamental question: have these developments made a difference on the ground? Canada believes the answer is yes. Children and those charged with their protection in Côte d'Ivoire, in Sri Lanka and elsewhere have benefited from some parties releasing children from their ranks and others establishing action plans to do so. We consider those results to be direct impacts of resolution 1612 (2005).

Canada also sees indirect benefits of resolution 1612 (2005), such as much greater awareness of the terrible plight of these children and the collective belief that it is simply unacceptable to recruit and use children in armed conflict. That view underpins Canada's strong support for continuing the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and for strengthening, through a new resolution, the protection framework that resolution 1612 (2005) created by addressing the other grave violations described in past reports of the Secretary-General.

Canada was proud to support the very recently adopted resolution 1820 (2008), on sexual violence and international peace and security. While we will monitor very closely the follow-up to resolution 1820 (2008), the abuses suffered by children cannot wait for yet another report to be issued in order to trigger action. Resolution 1612 (2005) works; let us now expand its purview to include all categories of violations against children. That means not only the recruitment and use of children but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children. As the Permanent Representative of South Africa said a few moments ago, all six violations should have equal weight. Canada calls on the Council to start negotiating a new resolution to that end.

Let me recognize the very important work of the members of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which is ably chaired by France with the strong support of the Secretariat. The Working Group forms a crucial part of the international protection framework for children affected by conflict. The Working Group's careful consideration of the situations brought to its attention can help ensure that parties respect their obligations under international law. We urge the Working Group to continue issuing strong conclusions calling for action by the various parties and to provide guidance on child protection to United Nations peacekeeping operations, political missions and country teams.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the impressive work done in this area by UNICEF, various non-governmental organizations and civil society actors who contribute to the monitoring and reporting mechanism and who work tirelessly to free children from the burdens of war. There are nevertheless numerous challenges to overcome. The international community must therefore strengthen its capacity to prevent crimes against children. It must also improve its reintegration strategies and ensure that those who commit violations are held fully accountable under national and international laws. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, which we are commemorating today, reminds us of the array of legal tools at our disposal to tackle impunity.

In conclusion, Canada reiterates its strong support for the work of the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict. Our expectations are indeed very high, but children deserve nothing less.

The President: There are still a number of speakers on my list for this meeting. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5936 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5936th meeting

Thursday, 17 July 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bui The Giang	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Lammens
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Somdah
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Costa Rica	Ms. Villalobos
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Fieschi
	Indonesia	Mr. Mulyana
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Alakhder
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lukiyantsev
	South Africa	Ms. Lazouras
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Steele
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2008/442)

Letter dated 11 July from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/455)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of South Africa, in which he requests that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Lila Hanitra Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union.

It is so decided.

I would like to remind all speakers, as I indicated in this morning's meeting, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in this Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on this important and topical issue.

The issue has been on the Council's agenda for quite some time. We take note of the Secretary-General's latest country report on children and armed conflict and the annual report of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is heartening to find that the continued engagement of the Security Council and the efforts of its Working Group have produced some tangible results and that many more, positive outcomes are in the offing. In that context, we note that certain countries and parties to conflicts have complied with the recommendations.

While we appreciate the activities of the Working Group, we would also like to see the discussion on its working methods and procedural issues completed quickly so that the Working Group can devote itself fully to its mandated activities. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, deserves our particular praise for her dedicated efforts in upholding the cause of children involved in armed conflicts.

In a recent field trip to a country emerging from conflict, I was struck by the shocking revelation of instances of voluntary or coerced recruitment of child soldiers in the conflict. I was struck by a story that a nine-year old, who was completely deaf and dumb, was using his toy of terror — in this instance, a loaded machine gun — to satisfy the thrill of killing. What prompts such actions? That is something that we need to ponder. We need to come up with solutions.

While many child soldiers are coerced into fighting, the induction of children into armed conflicts is often prompted by difficult socio-economic conditions. In that context, as also underlined in the concept paper before us, approaching the issue from a development perspective would be an effective way of addressing the problem in a more sustainable manner. While such a development approach should be a comprehensive one, there should be a particular focus on addressing the root causes of armed conflict from a proper perspective.

The vulnerable situation of children in post-conflict societies also needs special attention. For peace to be sustained, those children must be rehabilitated and reintegrated back into their communities more effectively. Reintegration and rehabilitation can be successful only if adequate incentives are given to child combatants to return to normal life. Reintegration would require instilling certain societal values as well as some psychosocial and ideological grooming of the returnees. Rehabilitation entails child protection and welfare.

National efforts in this context should be complemented by international assistance, including resource mobilization. The Peacebuilding Commission should have the issues of the rehabilitation and reintegration of children permanently on its agenda when taking up any country-specific configuration. The sharing of countries' best practices would be useful in formulating effective reintegration strategies.

The contribution of child protection advisers so far in nine peacekeeping and political missions can be regarded as significant progress. We would like to see such approaches incorporated in the other ongoing missions without delay.

The United Nations could explore the possibility of assisting national Governments in mobilizing a social movement in conflict-ridden and conflict-prone countries to develop social and moral resistance to the induction of children in armed conflict.

It is well documented that children suffer the most under unregulated sanction regimes. The Council has a duty to ensure that sanctions do not affect the innocent. The issues of children under foreign occupation must also be appropriately addressed. There should be special provisions for girl children, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence.

Despite the United Nations system-wide response, the overall situation of children in situations of armed conflict remains a matter of grave concern. Ensuring compliance by non-State actors and armed groups remains a big challenge. We must try to address those issues in a more resolute manner.

Children are among the principal and the most hapless victims in all wars and civil conflicts. Armed conflicts hold terrible consequences for children's development and for the peace and stability of generations to come.

Mitigating measures will have limited success unless there is a genuine political will for conflict prevention. We, the international community, should join hands to work towards that end, and the Council in particular has a responsibility in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor. Allow me to congratulate you on presiding over this meeting.

Uganda has been a proponent of identifying the causes of underage children finding their way into armed forces, in order to find a sustainable solution to the problem. We were quick to point out that even though the recruitment of children into our army was not institutionalized, we were not oblivious to the fact that some children, owing to the breakdown in institutional, social, economic and cultural values, managed to circumvent the system, present false information as to their age and be recruited. In most cases, the abject poverty in those areas led the parents to get their children employed in the armed forces by overstating their ages.

That was an issue that was, in the end, acknowledged by the Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting and by the Secretary-General in his seventh report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established with the determination to put an end to impunity for perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole and contribute to the prevention of such crimes. The parties to the Rome Statute were also mindful of the millions of children, women and men who had been victims of unimaginable atrocities that deeply shock the conscience of humanity. Article 6 (e) of the Statute recognizes that forcibly transferring children of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group to another group with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the first group constitutes genocide. Uganda holds in the highest regard the mandate of the ICC to fight against impunity. It is with that in mind that Uganda was the first to make a referral.

In that same spirit of cooperation, the Ugandan Government has been engaged in various initiatives with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to put an end to the practice wherever it has been identified and to ensure the delistment of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and Local Defence Units (LDUs) — which have now been disbanded — from annex II of resolution 1612 (2005). In this regard, I am happy to report that the Ugandan Government and the Uganda Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting have vowed to start negotiations to iron out the few hitches inhibiting the finalization of the action plan. This will soon be completed.

We believe that, as far as Government cooperation goes, Uganda has exhibited an undeniable spirit of partnership in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), regardless of the circumstances under which UPDF and LDU were included in Annex II to the resolution.

With regard to the sanctions or punishment regime, if it is to be believed that the motive for punitive measures against States accused of recruiting children into armed forces is actually to help the children, then a different approach, in my view, may have to be adopted. Demonizing countries and condemning Member States, even with the objective of ending impunity, will only delay and may derail an otherwise noble initiative.

Uganda is of the view that the fastest and most sustainable avenue for solving a problem is not by placing emphasis on punishment, but by engaging the parties involved in dialogue. Sanctions only punish the most vulnerable of society and, as history will show, only serve to harden an accused State's resolve.

In conclusion, there can be no durable solution to a problem whose root causes have not been identified or contextualized or are ignored when they are pointed out. Issues like poverty, lack of vocational skills or even the total absence of registration systems for births in conflict areas are too serious to be pushed aside. I would like to reiterate that Uganda remains committed to the protection of the world's children who are affected by armed conflict, and to ensuring respect for international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

Mrs. Eilon Shahar (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your able stewardship of the Council this month and thank you for convening this important debate. I also wish to thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Mulet, Ms. Venemen and Ms. Hunt for their informative statements and, more importantly, for their commitment and dedication to working on this issue before today's meeting. As others have mentioned, we would also like to commend the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, under the able stewardship of the representative of France, for its important work.

Children are primary victims in many cases of armed conflict. They are the targets of conflict and, increasingly, its instruments. While the United Nations has focused on the issue of children and armed conflict since the 1996 Graça Machel report, followed by Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) and many others, children are still involved in armed conflict as soldiers, with an alarming increase in cases of sexual violence and the culture of impunity.

In this regard, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) last month, which recognized the vulnerability of children in armed conflict to rape and other acts of sexual violence. Israel, for its part, assigns great importance to the protection of children from violence and armed conflict, as evidenced in its signature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on armed conflict. Indeed, we maintain a comprehensive system of laws, protecting children's rights across the board, and pay careful attention to the issue of children and armed conflict also through our vast non-governmental organization and advocacy networks.

Since the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, we has also worked closely with the United Nations to promote a constructive dialogue on this issue. My delegation has followed closely the Special Representative's recent travels around the world and her work to raise awareness about this issue.

Despite the evident progress, lessons learned from previous disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes for children are not being applied to armed conflict as they should. Child soldiers continue to be overlooked or do not have formal access to DDR processes, and thousands of returning soldiers do not receive demobilization assistance. Long-term reintegration is severely under-funded, and girls in particular are routinely neglected, despite their involvement in the conflict as fighters or subjection to severe sexual violence.

At the same time, there have been noticeable achievements in protecting children, inter alia, through Security Council resolutions that I have mentioned and the work of the International Criminal Court. The latter has issued arrest warrants for war crimes and crimes against humanity that include the forced enlistment and use of children in hostilities. Similarly, the Special Court for Sierra Leone's decision on Brima, Kamara and Kanu marked the first time an international criminal tribunal has invoked the offence of conscripting child soldiers.

The scourge of global terrorism means that civilians today are increasingly vulnerable and threatened, both from indiscriminate and targeted attacks. Children have also often become the object of terrorist interest for purposes of recruitment, incitement to violence and human shielding.

In our region, despite the "state of calm", Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip continue to fire rockets indiscriminately at Israeli cities in the southern envelope, including Sderot, placing children in particular peril. In Sderot, up to 94 per cent of children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The psychological effects are no less damaging than physical wounds. Indeed, until last month, the frequency of rocket attacks since June 2007 reached an average of one attack every three hours.

Israeli civilians are not only the victims of indiscriminate attacks; they are likewise targeted by terrorists. In March 2008, a Palestinian terrorist stormed a rabbinical seminary in Jerusalem and murdered eight boys in cold blood. The Security Council must unequivocally and unconditionally condemn such terrorist attacks and call for an end to violence against Israeli civilians and to impunity for those who commit acts of terrorism.

These terrorists do not even care or show concern for their own populations. Last month, on 12 June, Palestinian media reported that terrorists accidentally detonated a bomb in a weapons factory housed in a residential building in Beit Lahiya. Ten Palestinians were killed in the explosion and several dozens were wounded, among them many children, including the apartment building owner's four-month-old baby daughter. Hamas has long operated in civilian areas, using civilians as shields, and has commandeered schools and houses of worship for making weapons and planning and carrying out attacks. As evidenced, terrorism is a grave threat to all children — in our area, both to Palestinian and to Israeli children.

As many child soldiers are found within the ranks of armed groups, existing initiatives have limited impact in protecting children from recruitment and use in conflict. By their nature, armed and terrorist groups reject pressure and persuasion to end such practices. Hence, the international community must advocate for context-specific and more sophisticated strategies to address the practice of involving children in armed conflict.

On previous occasions, my delegation has raised the issue of indoctrination and incitement to violence, of youth and children in particular. Indeed, while we tend to focus our energies primarily on the conscription and use of children in hostilities, children need protection from all aspects of armed conflict, including programmatic attempts to brainwash them. In recent months and before, Hamas's Al-Aqsa TV has repeatedly called upon children to form human shields and carryout attacks and violence against Israel. Similarly, Hamas's summer camps are notorious for their indoctrination of children with propaganda, hate and violence.

For the international community to truly deliver on the issue of children and armed conflict, utilizing, inter alia, the development approach, we must holistically confront the conditions that condone and promote violence in society. This must be a shared commitment on the part of all States, parties and people. As Nelson Mandela once said,

> "No one is born hating another person because of the color of their skin, religion or background. Hatred and intolerance have to be learned and, if they can be learned, so can love and tolerance, which are more natural to the human heart. Even in the grimmest times I have seen glimmers of humanity, which have reassured me that man's goodness is the flame that can never be extinguished."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim (Korea): At the outset, let me express my appreciation for the work of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to end violations against children in armed conflicts. My delegation would also like to commend the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for her dedication to the alleviation and ultimate resolution of the plight of children in armed conflict.

A statement by the President of the Security Council adopted in February this year (S/PRST/2008/6) underlined the importance of the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and goods and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children affected by armed conflict. It also expressed concern about the widespread and systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children — in particular girls — during situations of armed conflict.

The prevalence of sexual violence in armed conflict has become horrible. The Secretary-General's report highlighted the fact that girls, and sometimes boys, have been targeted with various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, during armed conflicts. Alarmingly, close to 60 per cent of the victims of sexual violence are children in various areas of armed conflict, and sexual violence — in particular rape — has been deliberately used for political and military purposes in some conflict areas.

Unless the international community — specifically, the Security Council, which is the only body capable of taking forceful measures — responds with strong determination to end such violations, the situation cannot be improved. In that regard, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) on women and peace and security, and sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, is a very positive development.

The scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism of resolution 1612 (2005) should be expanded to include sexual violence as a trigger for listing a party in the Secretary-General's annexes. That is why many delegations welcomed the adoption of last February's presidential statement, which demonstrated the Security Council's readiness to review the relevant provisions of resolution 1612 (2005). We anticipate that a result will appear soon in the form of a new resolution.

Ending impunity is a critical element in addressing any kind of violations. Impunity for parties to an armed conflict, as well as for individual perpetrators, should be ended. In order to do so, the Security Council must refer systematic and persistent violators of children to the International Criminal Court, while paying full attention to the development of national justice mechanisms.

Effective implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) is also part of the critical work being done by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and of the consideration of the Security Council itself. The role of the Working Group could be further strengthened if it addressed concrete measures, such as the recommendation of targeted measures to the Security Council, in addition to monitoring their implementation.

Important new actors are emerging in the area of addressing the issue of children in armed conflict. Peacekeeping operations and political missions — particularly their child protection advisers — are included on the list. My delegation believes that their role is very important not only for the full implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, but also for the effective prevention of violations and for more comprehensive protection of children.

In that regard, the Security Council and the Secretary-General should send a strong message to the head of each mission to provide solid leadership. Above all, each national Government should take ultimate responsibility for protecting its own children. In that connection, technical and financial assistance should be provided for capacity-building, and Governments should cooperate fully with the Security Council in preparing and implementing action plans, including by establishing an effective and transparent justice mechanism.

Finally, my delegation would like to discuss the development approach, as emphasized in the concept paper. We fully agree that the international community needs a broader strategy for the protection of children from the perspective of both prevention and development. If we are to effectively address the complex issue of children in armed conflicts, ending violations, carrying out recovery and reintegration processes and protecting children over the long term require the full cooperation of all relevant bodies, including the Security Council; the Office of the Secretary-General; peacekeeping operations; political missions; the Peacebuilding Commission; humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organizations; and development actors. That is especially true at the field level; community-based programmes and the participation and contributions of non-governmental organizations are critical.

Today's open discussion on children and armed conflict should make a substantive contribution to the deliberations of the Security Council, as did the most recent open debate on that subject. The Republic of Korea looks forward to a new draft resolution that will move that most critical process forward.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): We are very grateful to you, Sir, and to the Vietnamese presidency for convening today's open debate. We share with other speakers the desire to make our views known to the Council, because the issue of children in armed conflict has been a priority area of our foreign policy and especially of our commitment within the United Nations. We understand your advice and will follow it as we present a shortened version of the text that is currently being circulated.

You have invited us, Sir, to express our views on how the Security Council, the United Nations as a whole and the international community can better deliver on the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Austria fully agrees that we need to look at the root causes of conflict in order to find sustainable solutions. Our interventions, I think we all agree, must be comprehensive and effective.

We also agree that there is an imperative need to improve support for and protection of children. The effective reintegration of children associated with armed groups is of particular concern. Therefore, the situation of children must be systematically included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The specific needs and capacities of girls have to be given special attention. The Austrian Government is committed to further contributing to efforts in support of affected children and is, as members are aware, supporting a number of projects implemented by United Nations partners and at the bilateral level.

The protection of children in armed conflict is not only a humanitarian concern, but also a significant peace and security issue. The protection of children must therefore be systematically considered in peace agreements and in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions. Austria welcomes the increasing deployment of child protection advisers over the past few years. We also actively support ongoing efforts within the United Nations system to further develop good practices and guidance for their work.

Indeed, the Security Council has an important role to play in providing effective protection to children in conflict situations. We wish to congratulate the Working Group, under French chairmanship, on its outstanding work, which is documented in the annual report now before the Council. Over the past six months, much time and energy has been spent on procedural issues. Therefore, we hope that the Working Group can now return to a greater focus on effective measures to protect children. More resources are needed for all actors concerned.

Austria would like to encourage the Council to ensure respect for its resolution 1612 (2005) and for all its previous resolutions on this issue. The fact that there is a long list of persistent violators is of increasing concern. We raised that concern at the last open debate on this subject, held in February, and we feel that we must do so again today.

This situation demands further action by the Security Council to strengthen the rule of law and to end impunity. We support the Secretary-General's call to make full use of the range of measures and tools available to the Council. We also call on the Security Council and on Member States to fully use accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, to bring to justice perpetrators of violations against children.

In this context, I would like to draw attention to the final report of the Austrian Initiative on the Security Council and the rule of law, which contains 17 concrete recommendations on how the Security Council could strengthen the rule of law in its various fields of activity. The report was recently issued as a document of the United Nations (S/2008/270) and is available in all official languages.

Austria also supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that equal weight be given to all categories of grave violations against children. As a first step, the crime of rape and grave sexual violence should be introduced as an additional element to trigger the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Together with many other speakers, we have laid out the reasons for that approach. Those reasons have gained even more weight in the meantime with the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence during and after armed conflict.

Austria believes that the Security Council should therefore carry forward its intention to further strengthen the framework for the protection of children by reviewing the relevant provisions of its resolutions and initiating work on a new resolution to increase the efficiency of its actions.

The future of our children depends on our response to the challenges before us today. Austria will continue to work closely with the United Nations and all our other partners to improve the situation of children, especially those affected by armed conflict.

In concluding, I would like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict for her activities, dedication, engagement and for the many endeavours she has undertaken to improve the plight of children in armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Nicaragua would like to thank Viet Nam for convening this very important meeting. The delegation of Nicaragua regards this debate in the Security Council as one more opportunity to call attention to the tragic evil that embroils hundreds of thousands of children in armed conflict around the world, depriving them of their family life, their childhood, their education, their health and above all, in most cases of the simple opportunity to live.

Over the past few years, there has been much discussion on that topic and tangible progress has been acknowledged, including the creation of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the adoption of commitments and plans of action by countries affected by armed conflict.

Nonetheless, many challenges remain to be faced. Moreover, we must not ignore the importance of sustainable reintegration into communities and family, in which education plays a decisive role as a factor for peace. Greater efforts must be made to ensure the right to education in emergency situations. Education has often been ignored in situations of armed conflict. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal on education, we must give more attention to the fact that education is currently not part of emergency response. At the present time, two thirds of the children of the world who are not in school live in countries affected by conflict.

Above and beyond all of those endeavours and the challenges that we face, if we really wish to put an end to the participation of children in armed conflict, we need to tackle the problem at its root — conflict itself. We agree with what has been said by many delegations and by the presidency of the Security Council in its statement issued in February, in which the need was stressed to establish a broad-ranging strategy of prevention aimed at attaining sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

What is needed is to seek urgently an alternative to unbridled capitalism, which exacerbates conflicts to the benefit of the economic interests of the arms industries or those that extract natural resources, which are ultimately the greatest beneficiaries of the suffering and death caused by armed conflict.

Lastly, my delegation would encourage all interested parties to continue to foster a constructive dialogue with the parties to conflict, which would yield tangible benefits for boys and girls affected by armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Frommelt (Liechtenstein): We thank you, Sir, for organizing this important and timely open debate and for distributing an excellent concept paper. We also commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and her Office for their dedication in advancing the work of the United Nations on that topic.

Liechtenstein has been actively involved in the efforts of the United Nations to address the plight of children affected by armed conflict since the very beginning. As a member of the group of friends of children affected by armed conflict, we will continue to do so and view this open debate as a further step that should lead to a substantive new resolution and towards a future agreement on the use of targeted measures against those responsible for the worst violations.

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) established a monitoring and reporting mechanism for serious violations of the rights of the child at the field level, as well as a Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict here in New York. While that decision has already proven its positive effects on the ground, it is important to maintain the political momentum and to further develop and enhance tools aimed at improving the safety and security of children affected by armed conflict. As foreseen in resolution 1612 (2005), the monitoring and reporting mechanism provides reliable information on situations listed in annexes I and II of the reports of the Secretary-General, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, attacks against schools and hospitals, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access.

However, only one of those six grave violations — the recruitment and use of child soldiers — currently triggers the inclusion of countries in the annexes of the reports. We therefore reiterate our call to treat all six types of grave violations on an equal basis as triggers for inclusion in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports. The current differentiated treatment of those violations is, in fact, difficult to understand in the light of the universality of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law.

Any measures taken by the Working Group in response to grave violations of the rights of the child have to be complemented by effective enforcement. One option worth considering in that regard is the expansion of the Working Group's mandate to recommend targeted measures, including arms embargoes, bans on military assistance and the imposition of travel restrictions on individuals.

With regard to the working methods of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, we are concerned by the slowdown in the publication of the Working Group's conclusions. While in 2007 conclusions were published at intervals of two to three months, this year we have not seen any conclusions since February. We understand that the procedural issues that led to the delay have been solved and expect more conclusions to be adopted during the second half of this year.

Liechtenstein also supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General, contained in his last report to the Council (S/2007/757), to refer to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for investigation and prosecution the violations of the rights of children that fall within the Court's jurisdiction.

Incidentally, this open debate coincides with the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, and anniversary activities are under way in parallel to the discussions in the Council Chamber. It is therefore most appropriate to recall that the Rome Statute of the ICC, among many other significant advances in the area of international criminal justice, also set a milestone for the fight to end impunity for massive violations of the rights of children. The specific references to sexual violence and the conscription and enlistment of child soldiers in articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute concerning crimes against humanity and war crimes must be highlighted in that connection.

The practical work of the ICC, in particular with respect to the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in northern Uganda, has already had a positive impact on the ground and is setting important precedents. When the first trial commences, hopefully later this year, the fight against the involvement of children in armed conflicts will gain additional prominence and draw even stronger international attention.

The ICC is therefore playing a supportive role in many areas where the Council has been actively engaged for many years. Other examples are the protection of civilians and the issue of sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict, recently addressed specifically in resolution 1820 (2008). The ICC's role is independent, but also complementary to the mandate given to the Security Council and in keeping with the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore hope that the Council will continue to give political backing to the ICC in carrying out its mandate under the Rome Statute.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. My appreciation goes also to the valuable presentations made this morning by Special Representative Coomaraswamy, Executive Director Veneman, Assistant Secretary-General Mulet and Ms. Hunt.

Since the Council first took up this issue about 10 years ago, we have been heartened by the progress made towards protecting children who have the misfortune to be caught in the midst of armed conflict. For example, important precedents have been set at the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone to put an end to impunity for crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups. The monitoring and reporting mechanism established by the Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the child protection advisers in the peacekeeping and political missions have all contributed to achieving concrete results. The dialogue amongst the parties concerned led to the release of more than 3,000 child soldiers in Côte d'Ivoire. In Chad and the Central African Republic, this May an agreement was reached by the parties to the conflict to release child combatants.

Despite some of those achievements, we are deeply concerned about the plight of an estimated 250,000 children who are still forced to serve in armed forces and armed groups. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (A/62/228) highlighted emerging critical issues of concern, including the lack of security in and around camps for internally displaced persons and refugees and the illegal detention of children for alleged association with armed groups.

Those children affected by armed conflict, who have been deprived of their families and of appropriate education, should be given every opportunity to enjoy normal civilian life. Post-conflict peacebuilding must address the lives and livelihoods of such children and ensure their full reintegration into communities. It is indispensable to provide not only physical protection but also basic human services. We should pay particular attention to alleviating the factors at the community level that are likely to lead to the recurrence of conflicts, such as discrimination against former child soldiers and the lack of productive economic activities for them. Physical and mental rehabilitation, vocational training and expanded educational opportunities should be provided to empower those victims. In post-conflict situations, Governments have the primary responsibility to lead the way by formulating and implementing child rights-based policies, while communities and civil society play an important role in building a climate of reconciliation and forgiveness.

The Peacebuilding Commission can support national efforts to address the needs of children. For example, the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi has made specific commitments addressing the needs of child soldiers and to promote their human rights in the context of transitional justice in response to Special Representative Coomaraswamy's briefing at the country-specific meeting. In the case of Sierra Leone, the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework recognizes that the education, employment and empowerment of youth are critical and priority issues.

At the last open debate on children and armed conflict here in February, the Council issued a presidential statement in document S/PRST/2008/6, inviting all parties concerned to enhance their exchange of information about programmes and best practices on the reintegration and rehabilitation of children. The Peacebuilding Commission, with its diverse stakeholders, is in a position to provide valuable support to develop a coordinated and integrated approach to achieve durable peace.

Children are the most vulnerable members of society when conflict breaks out. The concept of human security, focusing on the safety and security of the individual, which Japan promotes wholeheartedly, provides a vitally important perspective for the protection and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict. An integrated approach based on that concept is highly relevant to the entire process. Japan believes that those endeavours will, in turn, contribute to the international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, at the recent G8 summit, leaders stressed the importance of the enhancement of human security and the promotion of good governance in achieving those goals.

In mainstreaming the human security approach, Japan has been providing assistance and support to the programmes aimed at supporting former child soldiers and victims of sexual exploitation and violence in many countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Liberia. In addition, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, Japan supports capacity-building in local communities to build durable child-friendly environments, for instance, in Kenya and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development was also an occasion to address the importance of ensuring human security as a top priority.

Political leaders in Africa and in many other parts of the world agreed the importance of approaching seamless peacebuilding efforts from a human-centred perspective, encompassing conflict prevention, early warning, conflict resolution and the prevention of relapses into conflict, all of which contribute to durable peace. Equally crucial are a smooth transition between one phase and the next and the creation of interdependence between security, human rights and development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway.

Children bear the least responsibility for armed conflicts, yet when conflicts arise, they suffer the most. We therefore commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her valuable work. Through her tireless efforts, she lends a voice to children who otherwise would not be heard.

The Nordic countries reiterate their unequivocal endorsement of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757) concerning child rights and the role of child protection in future peacekeeping missions. Each of the six categories of grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005) must be addressed with equal resolve. We must act to put an end to all assaults on the human dignity of children.

Women and girls constitute the largest and most vulnerable group of victims in armed conflicts. Therefore, both those groups deserve our constant attention. In line with the recommendations of the report (S/2007/757) of the Secretary-General and of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, we ask that sexual and gender-based violence be included on the list of violations that trigger listing in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports.

We recognize the absolute importance of resolution 1612 (2005) and the mechanisms set up in its wake. We welcome the reports of the Special Representative announcing the release of hundreds of children from armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad. We also welcome the reports of progress made in Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, we remain deeply concerned at the high number of violations against children in the Sudan, including their recruitment by armed forces and groups, and rape and sexual violence, especially in Darfur.

Although promising progress has been made in some areas, there often remains a gap between words and deeds, between United Nations resolutions and actions by affected Member States. The monitoring and reporting mechanism provides the Security Council with reliable information on grave violations of child rights. With that knowledge comes responsibility. The Security Council should therefore seriously consider effective targeted measures against those who commit grave violations against children. We call on the Working Group to explore the full range of measures to hold persistent perpetrators responsible, whether they fall short of their own action plan objectives or choose to ignore the mechanism altogether.

Increased efforts are needed in order to end impunity for perpetrators of crimes against children. We welcome the progress made by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in persecuting individuals suspected of grave violations of the rights of the child. Nevertheless, effective national courts are also needed. Governments should benefit from the competence and capacity of the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism. We encourage the Security Council to refer violations against children in armed conflict to the ICC for investigation and prosecution when national Governments continuously fail to address such crimes.

The body of international humanitarian and human rights instruments leaves us with strong moral, political and legal obligations that must lead to action to provide a protective environment for the development of children, enriching their childhoods, expanding their opportunities and inspiring hope in our common future. The recently concluded Convention on Cluster Munitions, which will open for signature in December of this year, and the ongoing negotiations within the framework of the Convention on Conventional Weapons will, hopefully, serve as effective tools to that end.

The Nordic countries encourage the Security Council to ensure that it pays equal attention to all children affected by armed conflict. Procedural arguments concerning whether or not a specific situation is on its agenda should not undermine the Security Council's ability to discuss the plight of all children affected by armed conflict and, if necessary, to act accordingly.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union.

Let me start by commending the Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council for putting the important item of children and armed conflict on the agenda of the Council. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for their dedicated engagement in taking this important issue forward. I would also like to again thank France in its capacity as Chair of the Security Council Working Group.

As the Council is aware, the German Government has always attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, and in particular to the situation of children affected by armed conflicts. In the context of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, Germany finances and implements a number of projects to counter the recruitment of child soldiers and to promote their reintegration into civilian life, for instance in the Sudan and Nepal. We welcome the very significant progress made by the international community on that issue, but at the same time we are acutely aware of the necessity to redouble our efforts and to move the agenda forward.

The Security Council has made impressive progress on this issue since it was first put on its agenda, 10 years ago. In particular, the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) in 2005 is rightfully regarded as a milestone in creating an effective international monitoring and reporting mechanism on the issue of children and armed conflict. Progress so far shows that the mechanism is working well. Some parties to conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports have shown increased consideration of the issue. Some have even adopted action plans commensurate with the United Nations recommendations pertaining to the use of child soldiers and illegal recruiting practices. What is more, the monitoring and reporting mechanism also provides Member States with ample information and evidence of grave violations in the six major categories of violations against children, while focusing on the illegal recruitment and use of children as child soldiers.

However, important challenges remain. We believe that the Security Council should seriously start to discuss ways to take the issue of children and armed conflict forward. In our view, such a discussion should take up the following three points.

First, we should address all aspects related to grave violations against children in armed conflict, including the issue of sexual violence against children. That issue deserves our undivided attention. Perpetrators should be included in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports. In that context, we welcome the recent adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

Secondly, we must speak in clear language with parties to conflicts that keep appearing on the lists of perpetrators and with those parties that have chosen to ignore persistent calls to cease their illegal practices with regard to children in armed conflict. In our view, the Security Council should consider ways and means of imposing targeted measures against the main perpetrators. That should also imply the referral of serious violations to the International Criminal Court in cases where national systems fail to provide adequate protection for children in armed conflict.

Thirdly and finally, more attention should be paid by the Security Council to the mainstreaming of the issue of children and armed conflict in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions alike, for instance through child protection advisers and enhanced cooperation with the relevant United Nations actors, such as UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High commissioner for Refugees and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Finally, although it is of the utmost importance that the United Nations system as a whole continue to address the root causes of conflict affecting children — such as, inter alia, poverty, the lack of development and the lack of good governance — we believe that the Security Council should remain focused on a rights-based approach. That means the full implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, as set out in resolution 1612 (2005). Germany will remain engaged on the issue of children and armed conflict within the Security Council and with like-minded partners beyond.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

Mr. Tachie-Menson (Ghana): I would like to thank this month's Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council for organizing this debate. Allow me also to express my delegation's appreciation to the Chairperson of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for the annual report on the activities of the Working Group. Ghana remains convinced that the Working Group has a key responsibility in moving forward the children and armed conflict agenda by proposing stronger and more effective recommendations for the Council's consideration. We note with satisfaction that the sustained activity of the Council's Working Group has resulted in definitive conclusions and recommendations. We regret, however, the recent inertia in the Working Group's discussions, as that development may hinder progress. We hope that the desire to make positive differences in the lives of children affected by armed conflict will continue to be the guiding principle in the Group's deliberations. We express our support for the Chairman's recommendation calling for increased Secretariat support for the Working Group's effective and efficient functioning.

While acknowledging that the engagement of the Security Council has yielded some tangible results, the overall situation of children affected by armed conflict remains worrisome. The recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups continue to be a cause of concern. Numerous children have been killed and injured as a result of conflict, sexual violence against children and attacks on schools are on the increase in conflict situations, humanitarian access is restricted and aid to those unfortunate victims cannot be assured in many conflict areas. Obviously, more remains to be done to ensure the practical implementation of resolution 1612 (2005). The effective closing of the gaps in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) will require concerted action by all stakeholders, including affected States, parties to conflict, United Nations entities, peacekeeping and support units and the international community as a whole.

There should be no impunity for those who target children during armed conflict. The Secretary-General's report in document S/2007/757 strongly emphasizes national action to bring to justice individuals responsible for grave violations against children and to end impunity for such violations. The prime responsibility for investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators of such acts falls upon State authorities. Clearly, there is a need to build the capacity of national security and legal actors, including by increasing the provision of human and financial resources to the concerned authorities to strengthen their capacity to investigate and prosecute crimes against children. However, it is apparent that, where State authorities lack the ability to carry out those functions, the international community should play its role without fail.

Ghana continues to place emphasis on the effective implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. In order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, resources should be mobilized for programmes aimed at the sustainable reintegration of child survivors of conflict into their societies. It is also critical for DDR programmes to include primary health care, counselling and social support to address the special needs of girls in the context of armed conflict and the specific problem of sexual violence. Also, a sustained investment in development, especially in education and skills training, will secure the successful reintegration of children into their communities and prevent recruitment. Such programmes should include employment support and income-generating projects for former combatants. There is also an urgent need for the rehabilitation of school buildings and the provision of school materials to support continued schooling and the provision of life and vocational skills for children who have left school.

In addition, increased attention must be paid to sexual and gender-based violence, since the sexual exploitation of children in conflict situations has become widespread. It is significant to recall the Council's adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence during and after armed conflict. Under that resolution, we have an important opportunity to create a more systematic approach to protecting women and girls from sexual violence during conflict, as well as to providing timely and sustainable intervention. Our delegation's expectation is that the implementation of the resolution will take cognizance of the relevant thematic issues on the Council's agenda, including children in conflict situations.

We wish to applaud the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. The positive nature of the contacts and discussions of the Special Representative with respective Governments during her country visits have had the necessary impact by ensuring better collaboration on the protection of children.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that children affected by armed conflict, like all other children of the world, should have the right to live and to dream of a better future.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking the delegation of Viet Nam for its initiative to convene this debate, as well as for the preparation of the document previously circulated as a contribution to the discussion. I would also like to congratulate the Deputy

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, Mr. Pham Gia Khiem, for his work leading the morning's portion of this meeting.

I also thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman, Ms. Hunt and Mr. Mulet for their informative presentations

The open debate format for the briefing on the annual report of the Chairman of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict is very appropriate. It provides an opportunity to express points of view concerning the Group's work and its contributions to the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations system.

The protection of children and the promotion of their rights are priorities for my country. Colombia has ratified the international instruments aimed at putting an end to the recruitment of minors. Moreover, our legislation establishes obligations for protection against the illicit recruitment of children and adolescents. We therefore support all efforts that contribute to that end.

The Security Council Working Group has adopted important guidelines for its work, including the terms of reference and the tool kit. My delegation wishes to stress the importance of the guides and modalities continuing to be implemented in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005).

The Security Council established essential principles for the implementation of that resolution. One is the priority that it assigns to situations on the agenda of the Security Council and the differentiated treatment given to situations included in annex II of the report of the Secretary-General. A second aspect is its recognition of the primary role of national Governments in the protection of children affected by conflicts, as well as the duty of United Nations entities to cooperate with Governments. The Council also established the principles that govern the management of information in the implementation of the resolution. In addition to being objective, accurate and reliable, information should be thoroughly verified in close consultation with the Governments concerned.

My delegation has taken note with interest of the suggestions contained in the document circulated by the presidency. Of particular interest is the suggested approach on the protection of children, both from a human rights perspective and with a focus on development issues.

My country's commitment to fully guarantee the rights of children — and of all our citizens — is part of a three-pillar Government agenda: security based on democracy; investment based on social responsibility; and social cohesion based on prosperity and freedom.

Our democratic security policy, which has made it possible to restore security on our territory while guaranteeing the viability of democracy and the strengthening of the legitimacy of the rule of law, is a fundamental basis for strengthening the programmes to prevent the forcible recruitment of children and adolescents and to enhance the protection of children affected by the actions of illegal armed groups. We have arrived at this stage by restoring the State monopoly on the legitimate use of force in order to confront these groups. Our citizens have placed their trust in these policies, which has made it possible to continue this process in a sustained manner, by building investment and social cohesion.

The elements of the Colombian State's strategy on children and armed conflict include the prevention of recruitment, along with protection, rehabilitation and reintegration. Since 1999 the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare has provided assistance to more than 3,600 children and adolescents who have been taken away from illegal armed groups. The national budget resources for this programme for the period 2002-2007 were over $14 million.

The Colombian Institute for Family Welfare promotes concrete action at the regional level to assist and protect children and adolescents, for inclusion within the development plans established by the offices of mayors and governors.

The Office of the Counsellor for Women's Equality has integrated the gender perspective in the public policy implemented by the Office of the High Counsellor for Social Reintegration, aiming at providing solutions for the impact of recruitment on children separated from illegal groups. Through this focus on social integration, children and adolescents are supported in regaining self-esteem, participation, education, income generation, restored family ties and health.

As programmes are implemented, they generate the need to make further efforts at coordination and allocation of resources, especially in the field of training and education of human resources. International cooperation can play a significant role to complement those efforts.

In addition, since the establishment in December of our Intersectoral Commission for the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children, Adolescents and Young Persons, an important diagnostic and awareness-raising effort has been under way at the institutional level. Several factors that fuel the problem have been effectively neutralized. This has entailed an enormous challenge to the country.

From that perspective, I would like to reiterate once again the resolute will of the Government of Colombia to continue to advance in the protection of children affected by the actions of illegal armed groups, to strengthen the policies of prevention in this area and to channel international cooperation efforts to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay would like to underscore the importance of today's open debate on children and armed conflict, and that of the annual report of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Once again, we have an opportunity to stress the importance of continuing to make progress in improving the working methods of the Security Council with a view to adopting substantive reforms of those methods as soon as possible, within the framework of Council reform.

Children are one of the most vulnerable sectors of society, but at the same time they are society's present and its future. In that regard, we are particularly gratified at the high level of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; we appeal to those States that have not yet acceded to the Convention and its Optional Protocols to do so. We also urge full and effective implementation by States already party to them.

Uruguay recognizes the contribution of the International Criminal Court, which defines as war crimes those crimes that involve sexual violence or the recruitment or enlistment of persons under 15 years of age or their use as active participants in the hostilities of armed conflict, along with the contributions made by other international tribunals that have included the protection of children in their respective spheres of jurisdiction.

The delegation of Uruguay appreciates the efforts of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and recognizes the role that the Council has played; here, there has been movement from words to implementation. We also know that this item is included in the agenda of the General Assembly, a forum in which year after year Uruguay plays an extremely active role with a view to strengthening and increasing the involvement and responsibility of that universal organ regarding a matter that falls within its mandate and that is of universal concern.

We also owe special recognition to the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, whose mandate Uruguay fully supports.

The figures set out in recent reports on the impact of armed conflict are particularly disquieting. We are concerned at the continuing illegal recruitment of children in conflict zones, many of whom are abducted from refugee camps; at the various forms of sexual violence against children, which leave devastating permanent scars on their victims; by the cases of children detained in contravention of international law; at the systematic and deliberate attacks against schools; and at the nearly total impunity enjoyed by those who continue to commit crimes against children.

We reaffirm the need to assess the implementation and the format of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established through resolution 1612 (2005). We believe that its scope should be broadened to include all kinds of grave violations against children, for no violation is more serious than the others, and all must be given equal weight. We appreciate the broad and inclusive nature of the mechanism, which works with the involvement of all parties to a conflict: Governments, non-governmental armed forces, the United Nations system and civil society.

We believe that only through concerted and coordinated endeavours, through strengthening the norms of international law and through enhancing the use of available judicial mechanisms — in particular the International Criminal Court — will it be possible to formulate and implement plans of action against the grave violations that continue to assail children in situations of armed conflict.

The delegation of Uruguay is of the view that greater attention needs to be paid to the reintegration of children associated with armed groups and of those who have been victims of other grave violations of their rights, in particular sexual abuse or exploitation.

In that regard, we agree that there is a need to take a broad and comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, tackling the root of the problem in order to achieve a sustainable, long-term solution.

We applaud the work being done jointly by civil society and the United Nations system, including peacekeeping missions, in building lasting mechanisms to protect children. We believe that the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in peacekeeping missions and the inclusion by UNICEF of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions should be strengthened and should be given the appropriate support in terms of human, financial and technical resources.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Ms. Gendi (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the assumption by Viet Nam of the presidency of the Security Council, and to thank you for your invitation to this thematic debate on a very important theme, in order to address it from all its angles, whether security, political or humanitarian. I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General and thank Ms. Coomaraswamy for her significant presentation and her untiring efforts to protect children in armed conflict. I would like to commend the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for its continuous efforts, which we hope will bear fruit in eliminating all forms of violence perpetrated against our children in armed conflict.

Egypt has studied with much interest the Vietnamese concept paper and what it contains on the need for the United Nations to address the growing linkage between development and the situations of children in armed conflicts. That important idea was raised at a time when the United Nations was concentrating on this matter only from the perspective of its effect on international peace and security and on human rights, without attempting to protect or establish the right to development as one of those rights. There is no doubt that development, when available in its full range, can help to overcome the causes of conflict, establish peace and enable a return to normal life in situations of conflict. That would, in turn, protect children from any threat against their lives and from any form of violence that might be perpetrated against them, especially during armed conflict, whether manifested through the use of child soldiers or through sexual or other abuse against children.

There is no doubt that the linkage between development, peace and human rights, as endorsed by our leaders at the 2005 World Summit, requires more attention on our part through the implementation of that linkage on the ground, especially in the light of the positive effects of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty on efforts to achieve peace, prevent conflict and resolve any future conflict. Special emphasis must certainly be placed on efforts to establish that linkage in the coming period on the part of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the General Assembly, in cooperation with the various entities of the United Nations, in particular the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF.

The report of the Working Group shows some of the limited achievements accomplished in several countries where children have suffered as a result of armed conflicts, including Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Sudan, the Philippines, Colombia and others. At the same time, the report indicates that the situation is still very volatile and that the phenomenon is still spreading around the world and taking new and different violent forms. That makes it imperative for the Working Group to intensify the preparation of reports on the situation of children in armed conflict in every armed conflict and in every situation where children are under foreign occupation in all its forms and manifestations.

While the Working Group, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF work to that end, special emphasis should be placed on the reintegration and rehabilitation of those children, their reintroduction to normal life and the creation of the necessary conditions for them to enjoy similar standards of education, nutrition and health to those enjoyed by children in advanced countries. That will require the commitment of more financial resources and better coordination between the Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council. It will also require active participation between the private sector and civil society, with all its institutions, and the support of international financial institutions.

In order to achieve such a goal, Egypt was among the first countries to call for a visit by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, to examine the disgraceful humanitarian situations that children there are exposed to under foreign occupation and to come up with recommendations that could be feasibly transformed into decisions of the Working Group. However, the reports submitted by Mrs. Coomaraswamy on those visits, which were very objective and impartial, were only mentioned in passing in the report of the Working Group. At the same time, apart from a brief reference to the case of Afghanistan, the report did not mention anything related to children who are detained or in prison. No mention whatsoever was made of their situation, destiny or future, or of what kind of measures should be applied to guarantee their release and rehabilitation and preserve their future, especially in the case of Palestinian children detained in the prisons of the Israeli occupation forces and Iraqi children detained by the international coalition forces.

The Working Group must begin to look into the situation of those children, especially in the light of the adoption by the UNICEF Executive Board of the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy, in a way that guarantees an effective way of dealing with an entire generation of children who have been detained for vague or trivial reasons. That effort should be aimed at dealing with the root causes that led those children to resort to violence, at the forefront of which is occupation itself. Such a solution must be aimed at ending all forms of occupation and must endorse the need for occupying forces to respect human rights and their international obligations as an occupying authority and fulfil their responsibility to guarantee that all people enjoy their inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Ndabarasa (Rwanda): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to participate in the open debate on children and armed conflict and wishes to express our appreciation to the delegation of Viet Nam for organizing this debate. My delegation believes that this open debate should mark the beginning of a concentrated effort on the part of the Security Council to comprehensively address the issue of children in armed conflict, as set out in the concept paper of 7 July 2008.

Allow me to also take this opportunity to note with appreciation the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and a number of United Nations agencies — UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees — and many other international and local non-governmental organizations that work to protect children in areas of armed conflict. The employees of those agencies endure numerous hardships, including threats to their personal security, and deserve to be commended.

My delegation firmly believes that tackling the issue of children in armed conflict requires a holistic and coherent approach. In that respect, we view conflict prevention as the key to addressing this scourge. Conflict and poverty act as enablers and lead to children unwittingly getting caught up in or coerced into armed conflict. Extreme poverty can lead to conflict, and inevitably children and women become the first victims. It is therefore imperative that concerted attention be given to addressing poverty by achieving the Millennium Development Goals and through conflict prevention.

The Great Lakes region has experienced the challenges posed by genocide and armed conflict and endured the consequences first hand. Rwandan refugees and nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are being held hostage by the members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces and Interahamwe, also known as the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The FDLR continues to use that position to kidnap and forcefully recruit children into its ranks for use as soldiers, workers and even sexual slaves. In addition to this generation of young people being denied a future, they are indoctrinated with a genocidal ideology. Those young people are trained to carry and use guns and taught hate instead of arithmetic. That leaves the prospects for future peace and stability in the region severely threatened.

The Secretary-General's report contains some useful recommendations on the way forward. I will focus on two of them. First, the focus on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups in conflict afflicted areas has yielded some positive outcomes in the Great Lakes region and in other areas. However, it needs to be accompanied by a strengthening of the capacity of local authorities to enable them to establish the socio-economic infrastructure required to absorb demobilized former armed militias and to resettle internally displaced persons and refugees.

Secondly, my delegation believes that the Security Council should be firm and show leadership in dealing with the threat posed by armed groups in conflict-affected areas. My delegation welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1804 (2008), which seeks to comprehensively deal with the threat posed by the FDLR in the Great Lakes region. It is that kind of action that, if comprehensively implemented in concert with a development approach, will help rid us of the scourge of children in armed conflict.

The plight of children in armed conflict is not an abstract concept or the subject of television documentaries or films — it is anathema to us all. The people of Rwanda, more than any in recent times, have experienced the absence of real peace and security and the impact it has on our children. My delegation therefore wishes to reiterate its firm commitment to addressing the plight of children in armed conflict and to international peace and security through our contributions to United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions.

We remain committed to actively supporting the Security Council in its efforts to adopt both a development and a conflict-prevention approach to addressing the plight of children in armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malawi.

Mr. Matenje (Malawi): Let me begin by commending you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict and thanking you for allowing my delegation to address the Security Council.

At the World Summit in 2005, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children in armed conflicts. They also called upon States to take effective measures, as appropriate, to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, contrary to international law, by armed forces and groups, and to prohibit and criminalize such practices.

Despite that noble call, children continue to be kidnapped and forcibly conscripted or recruited into service around the world as armed fighters, guards, helpers or sex slaves. In the process, their rights are violated with impunity. Many die and others are displaced from their homes and communities, maimed or disabled and let to suffer untold physical, developmental, emotional, psychological, mental and spiritual harm. Because armed conflict destroys State structures that provide social services, children in armed conflict suffer from the loss of access to basic social services such as health care, education, water, sanitation and nutritious food, thereby deepening poverty. Those are issues of key importance to national and international peace and security, requiring the immediate, as well as long-term, collective attention of the international community.

In that regard, my delegation observes that some progress has been made at the international level in the development of norms, standards and guidelines aimed at combating the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict and at securing the release of children in armed conflict, supporting their reintegration into society and affording them the greatest possible protection from armed forces or groups. Those norms, standards and guidelines are incorporated into a number of instruments, for example the Paris Principles and commitments to protect children from recruitment or use by armed forces and armed groups, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child, the Cape Town Principles on child soldiers in Africa and other international instruments. However, more needs to be done to protect children from the menace of armed conflicts.

In that regard, we agree with the call made by the President of the Security Council on 12 February to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention that would address the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child. However, that can be achieved only if the Security Council works in full cooperation with relevant organs of the United Nations, such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, that are mandated to deal with development issues.

With regard to the rule of law, we note with concern that most countries affected by armed conflict lack the capacity to bring the perpetrators of armed conflict to justice due to a lack of resources. While national Governments have the primary responsibility to provide effective protection and relief to children affected by armed conflict, they need to be assisted in strengthening their law enforcement and legal and judicial systems in order to be responsive to the security needs of their people. The United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council have an important role to play in that regard.

In addition, States that have not done so yet should be encouraged to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and ensure that their national legislation is aligned to the Convention. Most importantly, the Convention and its Optional Protocol must be fully implemented in order to render them meaningful in the fight against the use of children in armed conflict. That is because the obligation to protect and assist children, both in times of peace and in armed conflict, is a basic principle of human rights and humanitarian law. In that regard, in addition to engaging official State agencies, it is critical for the international community to find innovative ways of involving non-State armed groups in ways that do not undermine the rule of law in seeking lasting solutions to armed conflict around the world.

In conclusion, Malawi appreciates the work of the International Criminal Court, UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to address the use of children in armed conflict in all its dimensions. Malawi also takes this opportunity to encourage the Security Council to ensure that political considerations do not override the need to protect children from armed conflict. Malawi condemns the use of children in armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate of the Security Council devoted to children and armed conflict. The level of the debate and the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister demonstrate the firm commitment of the Government of Viet Nam to that critical issue. I also commend the work done by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to draw the international community's attention to the impact of situations of armed conflict on children.

The subject that we are discussing today was first presented in detail to the international community in 1996, in Mrs. Graça Machel's report on the impact of armed conflict on children. The firm and committed reaction to that report led to the creation of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and to the formulation of a series of important Security Council resolutions that established a process to enable the United Nations and its Members to address this very serious problem. We welcome the progress made by the Council, including the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the development of action plans to end the use of child soldiers, and the important efforts made by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire fully appreciates the deletion of the parties to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire from the list annexed to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Those parties have been delisted because they have stopped recruiting children and have taken concerted steps to identify and release children in order to permit their reintegration. We welcome the fact that the Working Group established by the Security Council has taken note of the progress in Cote d'Ivoire, where parties previously associated with the illegal recruitment and use of child soldiers have put an end to those practices.

Côte d'Ivoire would like to take this opportunity to discuss a situation — one of which we are sometimes unaware — that occurs following the demobilization of children. Often, the reintegration of children into their community is not as easy as one would hope. Recidivism, or children's inability to behave appropriately in their family or their community, is a problem that deeply concerns us.

My Government welcomes the considerable work carried out by UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and their partners. However, it is not possible to protect children without involving the Governments of countries that face conflicts or that are trying to rebuild after a conflict.

In that regard, the United Nations and the Security Council must focus their efforts on promoting national measures aimed at strengthening the protection of children, at effectively implementing programmes for the demobilization and reintegration of minors, at creating social, economic and legal conditions that will prevent recruitment and at preventing other offences committed against children.

The rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups are essential. The international community must thus continue to provide the resources necessary to implement and promote national rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in order to ensure the long-term viability and success of such interventions. Such programmes must also take account of the particular concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups. We call on partners to include support for health and education as a priority in their emergency programmes, so that education, sanitation and health services and children's health care continue in camps for refugees or displaced persons during an armed conflict.

We hope that the comprehensive efforts made at the level of the United Nations system and in cooperation with interested States produce concrete results that will improve the situation of children in armed conflict.

As the Secretary-General indicated in his 2007 annual report on this subject (S/2007/757), the heart of the process is the formulation of action plans by States and non-State actors to put an end to the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Such action plans have proved to be effective ways to guide and measure the progress made. However, I should like to emphasize the following three points.

First, the Security Council must intensify its efforts to prevent conflicts and safeguard peace, in order to protect children by preventing or reducing the causes of armed conflicts. However, when conflicts erupt, the Council must strive to increase the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and to improve the humanitarian situations in conflict areas.

Moreover, when we look at the issue of children in armed conflict, we must constantly respect and support the role of Governments, as stressed several times in resolution 1612 (2005). Governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting their children. Other parties must seek the cooperation of the Governments concerned so that they can together remedy the violations committed against children in armed conflicts.

The Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict must improve their communication with the Governments concerned. They must recognize and support the positive steps taken by Governments to improve mutual trust. At the same time, politicization of the issue of children must be avoided. The protection of children should not be used as a pretext for interference in a country's internal affairs.

Finally, resolution 1612 (2005) must continue to serve as a basis for improving and perfecting the monitoring and reporting mechanism as well as the Working Group's activities in general. It is paramount that the Security Council address the issue of the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Currently, the mechanism is activated only in the event of violations related to the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and it is applied systematically only to situations that are formally included on the Council's agenda. In fact, the mechanism should be automatically applied to all situations of armed conflict in which the safety and rights of children are violated by armed forces or armed groups.

In conclusion, I should like to urge the United Nations not to resort systematically to sanctions when dealing with the issue of children and armed conflict, because situations differ from one another. As for parties to conflicts, I urge them to fulfil their obligations by respecting international humanitarian law and protecting the rights of children.

Finally, with regard to development partners, during the period of post-conflict reconstruction they must give priority to reintegrating children into the family, school and society and must ensure that the resources provided are adequate and substantial.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Ms. Kafanabo (United Republic of Tanzania): We thank the delegation of Viet Nam for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. The situation of children in armed conflict is a serious concern and warrants special attention by the Security Council. We also thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of the non-governmental organization for their contributions to the debate this morning and for their efforts to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

My delegation wishes to commend the efforts of the Special Representative and to place on record our support for her work. We also wish to commend the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, under the leadership of France. We call for more support for the Office of the Special Representative and for the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the discharge of their mandates.

The Security Council has come a long way since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), its first resolution on children and armed conflict, which has been followed by five other resolutions. Those resolutions and the presidential statements that have been issued on this subject matter have laid the foundation and the framework for the protection of children in armed conflict. We are encouraged by the progress that has been achieved in the protection of children in conflict situations as a result of continuous engagement by the Security Council on the issue.

We are further encouraged by the results achieved through the monitoring and reporting mechanism that was established under resolution 1612 (2005). However, we note that, despite those encouraging results, the situation on the ground is far from satisfactory. More concerted efforts are required to maintain the momentum and to further improve the lives of children affected by armed conflicts in all situations.

In that regard, we request that the Security Council consider monitoring the other grave violations in addition to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. We can start the addition of other violations in phases, beginning with sexual and gender-based violence as a trigger for action. That trigger is suggested in view of the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as of the magnitude of the problem of sexual violence perpetrated against children.

The continued violation of the rights of children, particularly in situations of conflict, is a matter of serious concern. My delegation is further concerned by the escalating incidences of rape and sexual abuse of children, especially girls, in times of conflict. We strongly condemn all violations of the rights of children, including rape and gender-based violence, the use of children as instruments of war, such as human shields, perpetrators of attacks, spies and suicide bombers.

We also condemn attacks on civilians and public property, especially those targeting schools, teachers and recreational areas. We have to hold perpetrators of those crimes accountable so as to end impunity. In that regard, we acknowledge the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in bringing the perpetrators to justice and call upon Member States to support the ICC. We also urge national Governments to strengthen the rule of law in their countries and to bring the perpetrators to justice. Furthermore, we call upon the Security Council to consider targeted sanctions against perpetrators.

One of our greatest challenges in protecting children is to end conflict. We need to tackle the root causes of war as well as to address other political, economic and social issues that can improve the situation of children and other civilians in situations of conflict. It is thus imperative that programmes being undertaken in conflict areas have a strong focus on children. We request the Secretary-General to ensure that trained and adequately resourced child protection advisers be stationed in all peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, children's concerns should be mainstreamed in peace processes and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes with a focus on long-term community-based reintegration. Adequate resources should be made available to those child-focused programmes. We urge the Security Council to remain seized of this issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Allow me to begin by expressing my delegation's gratitude to the delegation of Viet Nam for convening today's meeting on children and armed conflict. This meeting provides an opportunity to renew our strong commitment to ensuring the protection and rights of children in armed conflict, as well as to review progress made in that regard.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her visit to Afghanistan and her comprehensive statement.

All children have the same needs and share the same dreams. They represent the future of our societies and mirror the State they live in. The Government of Afghanistan is still making efforts to rebuild its country devastated by 30 years of war that dramatically affected the lives of our children, particularly girls. The major victims of the war in Afghanistan are our children. Years of conflict in our country have destroyed the basic necessities of life, such as schools, health care, adequate shelter, water and food, and disrupted family relationships. They have also created stigma and post-traumatic distress and generated a pessimistic outlook on the future.

Afghanistan is strongly committed to reversing the impact of war on children and fulfilling its obligation to protect children. The improvement of the situation of Afghan children and the comprehensive protection of their rights is an essential precondition for the sustainable development of our State. It will also lay a solid foundation for our next generation to live in peace and prosperity and enjoy its human rights. Our vision for ensuring the protection and well-being of our children is to develop an environment that provides security, guarantees economic and social opportunities and respects the rule of law.

We have achieved considerable progress in improving the status of children since 2001. Nevertheless, today we are facing critical security challenges that jeopardize the gains made in the past seven years and undermine our collective efforts to improve the living conditions of our children and give them a promising and bright future.

Terrorism continues to be a major threat and drastically affects the daily lives of our people, particularly our children. The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan is the product of the surge of terrorist activities carried out by Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other associated armed groups in the region. Terrorists have increased attacks in our territory, using barbaric acts and methods including car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices directed at national and international forces. Such attacks deliberately target densely populated areas where children are the prime victims.

The Taliban is using the most atrocious practices conceivable to conduct its subversive operations. Terrorists are recruiting, training and exploiting children as combatants and sending them to operate as suicide bombers. As Afghan and international security forces become more astute at recognizing suicide attackers, the use of children is increasing because children are not generally objects of suspicion. Child suicide bombers also constitute an effective instrument of psychological warfare because the spectre of the child attacker is as terrifying as it is incomprehensible.

The intensification of the Taliban intimidation campaign through the burning of schools and clinics, the night-time dissemination of threatening notes and attacks against teachers and schoolchildren has created an atmosphere of terror and traumatizes children, which prevents them from going to school and ruins their future. Furthermore, it undermines our efforts at achieving development goals aimed at improving the living conditions of our citizens, including children, and ensures a gloomy future for our people.

The state of hopelessness resulting from years of living in conflict and from poor socio-economic conditions, supported by the brainwashing indoctrination provided in madrasas across our borders are creating favourable conditions for recruiting and training innocent children to target a wide spectrum of Afghan and international civilian and military personnel. We are deeply concerned about the rising number of children killed and injured by the Taliban and other foreign terrorist groups.

We would also like to express our grave concern about the loss of lives and injuries of children during counter-terrorism operations. In that regard, we call on our international partners to exercise maximum caution and to enhance coordination with Afghan security forces during operations in order to avoid the loss of civilian life and ensure the safety and physical integrity of children.

The protection of children in armed conflict is one of the most daunting humanitarian and security challenges that the international community faces today. Addressing the socio-economic needs of children in armed conflict and ensuring their rights requires an integrated strategy with a special focus on poverty alleviation, especially among the most vulnerable segments of our society, including widows and orphans.

The successful implementation of such a strategy requires full cooperation and coordination among the Government of Afghanistan, development partners and the United Nations agencies. We would like to call on donor countries and development agencies to assist us in achieving sustainable development, poverty eradication and good governance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): I thank you, Mr. President, for initiating this debate on children in armed conflict. New Zealand also thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2007/757). New Zealand agrees with the report's recommendation that the Security Council should not limit its attention to the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but should give equal weight to all categories of grave violations against children, namely, killing and maiming, attacks against schools and hospitals, rape and other grave sexual violence, abduction and the denial of humanitarian access.

We were proud to sponsor recently Council resolution 1820 (2008) and welcome the recognition that children in armed conflict are acutely vulnerable to sexual violence. We look forward to the Secretary-General's next report, as requested in resolution 1820 (2008), and call for action to stop abuses against children.

We commend the progress made by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, with France as its Chair. We want to see it continue to publish conclusions that lead to strong and swift action against the perpetrators of grave violations against children. The Working Group is a vital component of a series of mechanisms for ensuring that children affected by conflict are protected.

We recognize the dedication of Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy to the commitments in her mandate and to the valuable findings she brings back from her field visits.

We acknowledge that today is the tenth anniversary of the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and take the opportunity to reiterate the central importance of the ICC in bringing to justice the perpetrators of abuse against children.

New Zealand commends all those involved, those countries where progress has been reported and especially the Security Council for the ongoing efforts to better ensure the safety of children affected by conflict. We call on the Council to continue its work to fulfil the mandate set out in resolution 1612 (2005), which we believe continues to provide sound foundations for the valuable work of the Special Representative.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): Let me begin by congratulating Viet Nam on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to thank you, Sir, for organizing this open debate on the important subject of children and armed conflict during Viet Nam's presidency.

Nepal appreciates the remarks made on the subject this morning by the Secretary-General; his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy; the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman; and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Mulet.

Armed conflicts continue to have a gruelling impact upon children. In most conflicts, children are often recklessly recruited by armed groups and left without much protection. In others, they are the ones who bear the brunt of the worst effects of war, including displacement. Sometimes they are also affected by sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Security Council's resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), and thematic debates have contributed immensely to addressing the plight of children in armed conflict. Although some progress has been recorded in the past decade to improve the protection and well-being of children in armed conflicts, much still remains to be done.

Ending conflicts is, without any doubt, the best way to protect children from them. Therefore, the issue of children in armed conflict should be taken into account in the light of the centrality of peace processes wherever they exist. Nepal supports the concept of including the protection of children in peace agreements and United Nations peacekeeping missions, as long as they contribute to the cause of protecting children while ending the conflict.

Where a peace process does not exist, the protection of children should be given paramount importance in all situations of conflict. Nobody should be spared from accountability for their actions against children, and no culture of impunity should be tolerated.

The welfare and protection of children in armed conflict should be viewed from a comprehensive perspective. Nepal subscribes to the approach of finding a durable solution from the standpoint of rights and development. In that context, the international legal instruments for the protection of rights of children should be rigorously applied in all circumstances. A long-term strategy aimed at solving the root causes of the involvement of children in armed conflicts should be the way forward. In that regard, we welcome the proposal of the Office of the Special Representative to conduct research on root causes. There also needs to be some work on addressing the development perspective of children in armed conflict.

Nepal accords high priority to protecting and promoting the rights of children who have been victims of armed conflict. We are working closely with the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and the Government and the political parties in Nepal are fully committed to implementing various recommendations of the Group, especially in the context of the ongoing peace process. Among other things, we are working with United Nations agencies on the ground to prepare a rehabilitation plan for those minors who will be released from the cantonments soon, as per the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on 21 November 2006.

The Government of Nepal is committed to ending impunity for crimes committed against children under any pretext. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, Nepal is taking measures to enact and implement the provisions of those instruments.

We are confident that our efforts will result in tangible achievements with the formation of a new government in the near future, which is likely to be headed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), as the largest party in the Constituent Assembly that we successfully elected on 10 April of this year. The declaration of the Constituent Assembly to make Nepal a federal democratic republic, ending the 240-year monarchy in a peaceful manner, has heralded a new era of political transformation. Those and other political developments are likely to have a significant positive impact on the protection and welfare of children affected by the 10-year armed conflict that is coming to an end in Nepal.

Nepal commends the initiatives taken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in creating a synergy to bridge the efforts of various agencies in addressing the plight of children affected by armed conflict in various parts of the world. The Government of Nepal looks forward to her proposed visit to Nepal at a mutually convenient time.

In conclusion, I wish to confirm that Nepal is committed to working with the members of the Council to create an effective framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict and in finding a lasting solution to this grave humanitarian problem.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): The Philippines welcomes this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict and congratulates and commends you, Mr. President, and the members of the Council for organizing it. Through it we may find lasting solutions and establish effective and durable measures that will prevent and eliminate the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. The full text of my statement will be circulated; I shall deliver an abbreviated version.

Each of us was a child. If we had not been loved, cared for and protected at that time, we would not have been here today. No one may successfully argue against the proposition that children are the best and most valuable treasure of every nation of the world. The Philippines' greatest national hero, Dr. José Rizal, enthrones children as the hope of the nation. It follows without saying that the abuse of children or denial of their rights is the destruction of the nation's hope and future and the dissolution of any promise for its progress.

Thus, the Philippines places utmost importance on children. The Constitution of the Philippines makes the child the core of the Filipino family. It recognizes the vital role of young people in nation-building and directs the State to promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being and to defend the right of children to assistance and provide them special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development.

The Philippines has a vast arsenal of statutes on the rights of or concerning the protection of children, such as the Family Code, the Child and Youth Welfare Code and, more important, Republic Act No. 7610, otherwise known as An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination. Apropos the issue at hand, that act includes provisions prohibiting the use of children in armed combat and protecting them from armed conflict. It establishes children as "zones of peace" and provides for the evacuation of children during armed conflict. In that regard, pursuant to Executive Order No. 56, which was issued in 2001 by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Philippines has established a comprehensive programme framework for children involved in armed conflict, which is implemented by 18 Government agencies with the active participation of civil society.

The Philippines is a State party to international agreements for the protection of the rights of children. More relevantly, it has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. At the regional level, in 2001 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations adopted a declaration of commitment on children.

The adverse effects of conflict on children are immeasurable and will affect them throughout their lives. Often, those effects lead to the destruction of their frail and still developing psyches, cause unspeakable mental anguish and, in the worst cases, bring about their untimely and undeserved deaths. The Philippines is fully aware of the need to rectify that situation as soon as possible, as well as to stop the torment of child soldiers and to reintegrate and rehabilitate the unfortunate children thus affected.

The Philippines has exerted vigorous efforts in that regard and is continuing to take the most effective action in cooperation with all stakeholders. Our positive efforts have been recognized by the international community, with the United Nations having cited and commended the very high standard of the legal framework in the Philippines, which effectively protects children. The Organization has also cited the Philippines' positive and constructive cooperation with the United Nations on the issue of children and armed conflict, in particular as regards the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

The Philippines would once again like to underscore its avowed policy to consider children as zones of peace, as I mentioned earlier. Moreover, the Government is doing all it can to prevent and eliminate the recruitment and exploitation of Filipino children in armed conflicts. Furthermore, many children involved in armed conflicts because of non-State actors have been rescued, rehabilitated and reintegrated into their families and communities by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

A recent development worthy of note is the review being conducted by the Philippine Government to include provisions relating to children in armed conflict in the ongoing peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. That is consistent with moves to mainstream the issue vis-à-vis those two non-State actors, in particular in the context of the peace process. It must be stressed, however, that the Philippines reserves the exclusive right to deal with non-State actors in the Philippines.

Another development in the Philippines is the continuing work being done by the Inter-Agency Committee on Children Involved in Armed Conflict pursuant to the comprehensive programme framework to which I referred earlier. The Committee has organized dialogue workshops with frontline service providers. The project hinges on the three priority areas of the Committee, namely, first, improving monitoring and reporting of the Committee's cases; secondly, improving institutional coordination; and, thirdly, effectively rehabilitating and reintegrating into the community children affected by armed conflict.

The strength of the legal protection afforded to children in the Philippines, the comprehensive and coordinated activities of the Government to protect, rehabilitate and reintegrate children affected by armed conflict and our excellent cooperation with the United Nations, which has brought about positive changes on the ground and resulted in increased protection and safety for children, constitute key indicators of progress. In the light of those measures, the Philippines recommends that the Security Council seriously consider ways of evaluating progress in the protection of children affected by conflict. In doing so, the Council would conclude that the Philippines can be dropped from the list of countries included in annex II of the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005). Due process now supports such a course of action.

The removal of the Philippines from the list would be a signal triumph vis-à-vis my country's commitment to doing justice to the children caught up in armed conflict, and to their loved ones. It would equally be a victory for the United Nations and would further encourage the Security Council to focus on other countries in dire need of help. It does not take a leap of the imagination to realize that there are more children in other places who are at risk or who are being deprived their rights, their futures and even their lives due to more serious causes than armed conflicts.

In conclusion, the Philippines wishes to reiterate its appreciation for the importance that the Security Council attaches to the issue of children and armed conflict. We assure the Council of our continuing cooperation on this issue. The Philippines would again like to place on the record that it looks forward to the visit of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in order that she can see for herself the relative calm and peace that prevail in my country and can see that it is not in a dire situation of armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to participate in today's open debate. My delegation appreciates the decision of the Vietnamese presidency to focus on ways and means by which the international community as a whole can contribute to achieving a long-term and sustained solution to the issue of children and armed conflict.

We also believe in a broad strategy of conflict prevention. In cases where conflicts occur, national reconciliation must be the preferred strategy. In that connection, we are speaking from our national experience. As a result of our policy of national reconciliation, 17 out of 18 insurgent groups have now returned to the legal fold. Peace and stability prevail in almost all quarters in Myanmar. The country is no longer in a situation of armed conflict.

We have also been addressing successfully the issue of under-age children in the military. In its summary, the report of the Secretary-General on Myanmar (S/2007/666) pointed out that "The Government of Myanmar has made a commitment at the highest level that no child under the age of 18 will be recruited". In that regard, I wish to stress that Myanmar's international obligation is not to recruit anyone under 16 years of age. However, our domestic rules and regulations provide for a higher standard. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act and the directives of the War Office Council, the minimum age requirement for recruitment into the military is 18 years.

The Myanmar Armed Forces, including Tatmadaw Kyi, is an all-volunteer army; those who join the military service do so of their own free will. Forced conscription in any form is strictly prohibited. A new directorate has been established to oversee strict adherence to orders, regulations and directives in the recruitment process. However, there are cases where persons younger than 18 years of age have professed themselves to be older and have been able to enter military service. There are also cases where recruiters, particularly in far-flung areas, are lax in enforcing the minimum-age requirement.

In January 2004, therefore, the Government established a high-level committee for the prevention of the military recruitment of under-age children as soldiers. To achieve its objectives, the committee has adopted a plan of action to strictly ensure that children under 18 years of age are not recruited into the armed forces. Public awareness measures have also been put in place. The Committee has also set up a task force composed of the relevant ministries.

What I would like to stress here is that a mechanism and the necessary regulations are in place to ensure that no one under 18 is recruited into the military. In order to raise awareness among those who are involved in the recruitment process, officers of the Office of the Adjutant-General conduct talks on the protection and promotion of child rights and the directives and regulations governing the recruitment process. UNICEF is also invited to conduct lectures on the protection and promotion of child rights. New recruits found to be underage at recruitment centres or training bases are discharged and handed over to their parents or guardians. Punitive action is taken against recruiters who contravene regulations.

The Government has been providing detailed information regarding the progress made in its awareness-raising activities, the number of and specific particulars about under-age children discharged from the military and other pertinent data to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. That information was also provided to the resident representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, who have from time to time had occasion to visit recruitment centres to witness the recruitment process first-hand. We also invited Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to visit Myanmar. During her visit in June 2007, the Government of Myanmar demonstrated its positive engagement by agreeing to set up a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

The Government is implementing a policy of stringent scrutiny at the recruitment stage, at the training stage and even after the training period. As a result of that strict scrutiny, between February 2007 and May 2008 some 1,049 underage persons were rejected at the recruitment stage. From 2004 to May 2008, 259 people who had slipped through the initial scrutiny were discharged from the military. From 2002 to January 2008, disciplinary action was taken against 44 military personnel who failed to strictly abide by the recruitment criteria.

Education is an important element in addressing the issue of child soldiers. The Government, actively assisted by UNICEF, has conducted a number of seminars and workshops. Between November and December 2007, a total of four workshops and seminars were held, in which both World Vision and Save the Children took active part. Those were followed by a number of multiplier courses. Between 1 February 2008 and 30 June 2008, we are able to conduct multiplier courses all over the country, attended by over 100,000 military personnel and their spouses.

I also wish to inform the Council that the six armed groups that have come back to the legal fold, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, have committed themselves and openly declared that they will not recruit child soldiers.

Resolution 1612 (2005) contains important elements for addressing the issue of children and armed conflict. Here, I wish to stress in the strongest possible terms the need for United Nations entities to abide strictly by the stipulations of resolution 1612 (2005), in particular regarding the dialogue established under the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism by United Nations entities with non-State armed groups. Allow me to also stress that resolution 1612 (2005) also stipulates that the mechanism must operate with the participation of and in cooperation with national Governments.

I wish to conclude by stressing once again that the Government of Myanmar has made a commitment at the highest level that no one under the age of 18 will be recruited into the military. We have set up a mechanism through a high-level committee for the prevention of military recruitment of underage children. We have also established working groups under the committee and have set up two focal points, one in the Ministry of Social Welfare and the other in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to cooperate with the United Nations Country Team.

The United Nations Country Team in Myanmar has been a good partner and is supportive of the Government's endeavours to prevent the recruitment of underage children into the military. We will continue our cooperation with the United Nations Country Team. We have high respect for and confidence in Special Representative of the Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy and her integrity. We will continue our cooperation with her.

Allow me to express the hope that the positive steps taken by Myanmar to address the issue will be accorded the recognition they deserve and that Tatmadaw Kyi will be removed from the annex of the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tonga.

Mr. Tupouniua (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States, comprising Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. We congratulate you on your leadership in taking the initiative to highlight the impact of armed conflict on the security of children.

The issue of armed conflict and its impact on children is of great importance to the world, and it is also relevant to our region. Children and young people make up a large percentage of our population, and the challenge of providing a safe and secure environment is of paramount importance to our leaders. We may not have the problems of child soldiers, as experienced by some United Nations Member States, but our region has experienced internal conflicts, and those conflicts have had a negative impact on our children and young people. We also face the challenge of cleaning up our environment to make sure it is free of old munitions from previous world wars. Old munitions are hazardous to our environment. They affect our waters and fishing environment. They also have a negative impact on the health of our children. Therefore, a long-term approach would be beneficial to maintaining a safe and secure environment for the next generation.

The work initiated by the Security Council has made a difference in exposing the detrimental impact of armed conflict on children. The Security Council's initiative on children and armed conflict has yielded positive results in extending more protection to children in conflict situations. The Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict has systematically reviewed 18 country reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and 13 sets of recommendations were adopted on the basis of the conclusions of the reviews. Nine peacekeeping missions involve child protection advisers, and the security of children has also been featured in peace agreements.

It is important that the Security Council sustain the efforts to implement the four formal action plans listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report in order to end the recruitment of child soldiers. We are aware that an estimated 1,400 children have been released as a direct result of compliance with the action plans. There is a need, however, to also focus on preventative measures with regard to that issue. Protecting the physical security of children is the first step.

We must take extra steps to ensure that children are cared for in post-conflict development. Children who have experienced the trauma of war, particularly child soldiers, should receive the necessary support to help them with reintegration into their communities. Many reports have shown that it is particularly difficult for child soldiers to be accepted by their families and communities due to the atrocities they were forced to commit during times of conflict. Efforts are needed, therefore, to work with Member States and grassroots organizations to make provisions for child soldiers. Many lack access to education, basic housing and health care. Younger children, particularly young girls, are easy targets for violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. The recent report of the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking noted that the increasing demand for forced labour and sexual exploitation leaves children vulnerable.

It is important to sustain the health and well-being of children by eliminating possible security threats to their mental, physical and emotional well-being and to create an environment that promotes safety and healthy development for those children after they have been rescued. It is also important to stimulate economic development and growth in post-conflict settings so those children and young people will have access to education, vocational training and employment opportunities. In particular, it is important to provide our children and young people with educational and vocational opportunities to promote political and economic security within our region.

We hope that the Working Group will continue to monitor the treatment of children and child soldiers in conflict situations. Greater cooperative efforts between the Working Group and relevant United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNICEF, are important in making provisions to promote community-based reintegration for children in post-conflict development.

The preventative approach advocated to deal with the issue of children in armed conflict situations also applies to other threats to international peace and security. It is important to take active measures to address the security implications of cross-cutting issues, as those issues are not labelled as traditional security threats but, in reality, have serious security implications. For instance, climate change is a cross-cutting issue that is relevant to international peace and security, and it is our hope that the Security Council will adopt a proactive approach to addressing the security implications of climate change, as it has done with the issue of children and armed conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We express our appreciation to the representative of the United States of America for his masterly guidance of the work of the Security Council in June.

Benin, which conducted the negotiations leading to the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), welcomes the remarkable progress made thus far in its implementation. We pay a well-deserved tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy; to the members of the Working Group of the Security Council and its main leader, France, co-sponsor of the resolution; and to all of those in the field who have provided new impetus to the follow-up mechanism and the communication of information on children in armed conflict.

The performance of the mechanism is indeed most commendable, in particular since the issuance of the independent study that made it possible to consider jointly the situations referred to in annex I of the Secretary-General's report, those situations which are on the Council's agenda, and those that are not the Council's agenda listed in annex II, on the basis of the mandate provided by resolution 1379 (2001). We encourage the Working Group to continue to work in the spirit of the universality of its mandate and the equitable treatment of all of the violations reported to it. We welcome the invaluable contribution of UNICEF to that positive evolution of the mechanism.

Progress made in the protection of children affected by conflict can be measured in the large number of children who have been liberated or demobilized in both categories. While we are delighted by those developments, there remains a great deal to do towards making a reality of our dream of a world without child soldiers, without children who are mutilated or killed, without schools that are bombed and without sexual violence being perpetuated on children; a world without war against children, who are the future of humankind.

The Council must tirelessly pursue its actions by maintaining pressure on parties to conflicts. Without belittling the advantages of the dialogue that has been advocated by the Working Group of the Security Council, in our view it is intolerable that we still have more than 15 parties to conflict that continue with full impunity to violate the rights of children in various ways, despite the ongoing efforts made by the international community to persuade them to mend their ways.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has begun to play an active part in combating impunity for crimes committed against children in armed conflict. The Court requires the cooperation of States to achieve its goals. We congratulate the ICC on its tenth anniversary.

For its part, the Security Council should no longer tolerate challenges to its authority if it intends to preserve the credibility of the mechanism and its own credibility in exercising the powers entrusted to it by the Charter. The effectiveness of the Council depends to a large extent on its internal dynamics.

There may be differences in the interpretation of resolution 1612 (2005) and of earlier resolutions, but at the time that the resolution was being drafted, we could not imagine that the Working Group would be deprived of the capacity to impose measures targeting those parties which violate the rights of children once verification of criminal acts had taken place.

We find ourselves in a situation which, back in 2006, was already of interest to the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight, which, in the first recommendation of its report, emphasized the disparity between, on the one hand, the objectives and intentions ascribed to the mechanism and its original intent and, on the other hand, the fact that, in practice, there was heavy emphasis on documenting verified violations and that specific action by the Council was still not forthcoming, despite the seriousness of the violations.

That is the case despite the relevant provisions of resolution 1612 (2005). In paragraph 8 (a), the resolution states that the Security Council decides, inter alia, to entrust the Working Group with the recommendation of measures to promote the protection of children affected by armed conflict; in paragraph 9, reaffirms that it intends to consider imposing, through country-specific resolutions, targeted and graduated measures against parties to armed conflict which are on the Council's agenda and are in violation of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict.

Those paragraphs provide sufficient leeway for the Working Group to propose measures against the parties involved and for the Security Council to find the appropriate formula for follow-up to those proposals. It is our hope that the Council will be able to mobilize the necessary political will to make full use of the potential of resolution 1612 (2005).

If the general understanding is that the aforementioned provisions deal only with situations on the agenda of the Council, and if we conclude therefrom that the mechanism lacks the ability to act against parties in situations that are not on the Council's agenda, it is then up to the Council to bridge that gap. The earlier that is done the better, so as not to perpetuate the practice of double standards in its efforts to protect children in conflict situations.

We call on the members of the Council to work vigorously to strengthen international measures for the protection of children in conflict situations, both in terms of mandates and in terms of resources allocated to the various component parts.

At the same time, my delegation would like to draw the Council's attention to the need to become even further involved in the rehabilitation of child victims abuse in conflict situations and to ensure that poor communities are not left to deal alone with the physical and psychological trauma inflicted on those children.

The situation of children affected by armed conflict should enjoy all due attention in the context of peacebuilding efforts. The international community should further contribute to the social reintegration of those children by ensuring that they receive the education and support they require and to which they have a right if they are to grow and realize their full human potential. At stake are the future stability of their countries, the regions in which they are located, and international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Kavanagh (Ireland): Ireland welcomes this opportunity to address the Security Council on the subject of children and armed conflict. We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset let me thank you, Mr. President, and the Government of Viet Nam for organizing this open debate on so important a topic.

Since the issue of children and armed conflict was formally placed on the agenda of the Security Council in 1998, the progressive engagement of the Council has yielded significant gains for children.

Ireland supports the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on children and armed conflict established by resolution 1612 (2005). In that regard, we welcome the annual reporting of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The creation of the Working Group gives firm evidence of the international community's commitment to addressing that issue at the highest level.

Ireland welcomes the adoption by the Working Group, under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of France, of concrete conclusions, which contain increasingly specific requirements and recommendations. These remind States of their obligations and encourage them to take measures to strengthen child protection. We note that, in many cases, the conclusions have already had a positive impact, including with regard to drops in child recruitment and enhanced dialogue between parties to conflicts and the United Nations. Ireland calls upon all parties to implement the conclusions of the Working Group. We also call for the Security Council and the Secretary-General to look into the need to give the Working Group the means required to enable it effectively and transparently to continue its work for the benefit of children.

Ireland is the current Chair of the Human Security Network, a position that we will hold until May 2009. The harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children has been one of the priority issues for the Network since its establishment almost 10 years ago.

We continue to be a strong supporter of the valuable work of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We would like to take this opportunity to commend Ms. Coomaraswamy and her Office for their committed efforts in raising awareness, engaging with parties to conflict through her field visits and keeping this issue high on the international agenda.

Ireland also recognizes the need to promote a broad-based approach to the problem and, in that regard, fully supports — in addition to the work of the Office of the Special Representative — the endeavours of UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, along with non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and national authorities.

We would also like to underline the importance of the role that the International Criminal Court can play in the fight against the impunity of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out against children, including perpetrators who enlist and conscript child soldiers.

Ireland draws attention to the establishment of the European Union's Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, which could be drawn upon by other actors, and to the integration of that issue into the Union's development and humanitarian policies. In the context of the European Security and Defence Policy, the issue is also integrated into external crisis management operations of the Union, such as the European Union-led peacekeeping force, which is currently in place in Chad and the Central African Republic under a mandate conferred by the Security Council.

Children affected by armed conflict are among the most frequent victims of serious human rights violations and abuses. During an armed conflict, girls in particular are subject to widespread — and at times systematic — gender-based human rights violations that have far-reaching repercussions. As Chair of the Human Security Network, we have chosen to focus on the theme of gender-based violence. In that regard, we note in particular that the Secretary-General's report issued in December 2007 (S/2007/757) recommends, in its paragraph 160,

> "that the Security Council give equal weight to all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children".

Successive resolutions of the Security Council have also recognized such grave abuses. Resolution 1325 (2000) recognizes the human rights of girls and their right to protection, including protection from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Resolution 1325 (2000) also recognizes the special needs of girls in post-conflict situations and the necessity of taking girls' rights and needs into account in designing peace programmes, peace agreements, camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Most recently, Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) highlights the targeting of girls through the use of sexual violence and demands that all parties to armed conflict take appropriate measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

In closing, let me reaffirm that Ireland is committed to working closely with the United Nations system, as well as with other relevant international and regional organizations, to relieve the suffering of children in armed conflict and to bring an end to serious violations and abuses of children's rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Barnes (Liberia): I would like to thank the presidency of the Security Council for organizing this meeting to discuss and debate this very important matter. In view of the fact that my country, Liberia, is just emerging from a tragic drama in which children were devastatingly victimized in a brutal civil war, I feel morally obligated to add my voice to the ardent appeal for the international community in general, and this body in particular, to find practical and effective solutions to the issue of children and armed conflict.

For me personally, the problem of children and armed conflict and the far-reaching consequences of children being caught up in armed conflict — whether as innocent victims or as conscripted armed fighters trained and conditioned to perpetuate unspeakable violence against their fellow human beings — is not an abstract concept. As a result of our civil conflict, I am personally acquainted with quite a few former child soldiers whom I have observed to be physically and emotionally damaged.

In many ways, the kids and young adults whom I know and who are ex-combatants are just that: children and young adults. Yet, upon closer examination, one can see the scars of deep hurt and pain in their eyes. At the slightest provocation, such individuals may be prone to resort to violence because they have been conditioned to respond to almost any situation with brutality. Their humanity has been buried deep beneath a tough, unfeeling exterior.

I encountered a young Liberian during a time when there was a brief respite in the fighting. He asked me for a job, and, although I had been warned that he was an ex-combatant, I wanted to help. Thus, I hired him. Most of my neighbours wanted nothing to do with this unfortunate young man and treated him like a pariah. Over time, we would talk and my young friend told me how he had gotten into the killing business.

He was only about 10 years old when rebels raided his village and killed his parents in front of him. Orphaned, he was soon urged to join another rebel group, as part of what was referred to as the "small boys unit", to avenge his family and just in order to survive. At first, his rebel commanders armed him with a slingshot and a machete. As a novice, he would hit his target with a stone slung from his slingshot and then finish off the stunned victim by chopping him to pieces with his machete. Eventually, as a sign that he was a fully matured killer, he graduated to the prized AK-47.

Most of my conversations with this young man left me speechless, but once I did ask him if he had any regrets. He said to me, "Only one. Once, an old man begged me not to kill him, and I shot him anyway." My young friend looked haunted. His humanity had been taken away. While he is only one example, there are countless other examples of children worldwide who have been directly involved in and impacted by armed conflict.

Our world is continually becoming a smaller place thanks to the phenomenon we all call globalization. I say that this globalization is a double-edged sword. Humanity can choose to be on the cutting edge or the bleeding edge of the globalization sword. If we of this generation do not do right by our children — who are the future — we can rest assured that the bleeding edge will be the dominant force of the future of our common humanity.

My delegation seizes this opportunity on behalf of the children of the world to plead to the collective conscience and morality of the United Nations — which represents the best hope for a future that is safe, free, just and prosperous — to take the bold and courageous actions necessary to protect our children and the future of our planet. We can choose to take those bold and courageous steps now and correct this scourge or pay the drastic price of a more violent and uncertain future. Left to its own devices, the phenomenon that produces children victims and killers today will only yield adult victims and killers tomorrow.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Rodríguez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Mexican delegation is grateful to Viet Nam for convening this public debate on an issue of great topicality on the international agenda and of great importance to the agenda of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Mexico notes with concern that the great majority of victims in armed conflict continue to be civilians, and in particular children, who have suffered from deliberate killings and maimings as well as the indiscriminate use of force, in violation of applicable international law.

My country's Government commends the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Working Group on this topic and UNICEF in implementing resolution 1612 (2005). Nonetheless, and despite those efforts, Mexico regrets the fact that the situation of children in countries in armed conflict continues to be serious. That is why the international community must continue to take action to eradicate the problem.

Mexico endorses the Security Council's appeal, reiterated in the presidential statement of 12 February, for the adoption of a broad-ranging strategy of conflict prevention that would address in a comprehensive fashion the underlying causes of armed conflict in order to guarantee better protection for children in the long term.

At the same time, my country applauds the resolve expressed by the Council that it will continue to include or increase the numbers of child protection advisers in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and political missions, and reaffirms the importance of their also being included in demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes. In that regard, Mexico attaches great importance to the inclusion of the issue of the protection and rehabilitation of children in peace negotiations, to the demobilization of child soldiers throughout any conflict, and to the application of preventive measures to ensure that they are not recruited again or suffer reprisals.

Mexico wishes to underscore its concern that children continue to be the main victims of the increase in the indiscriminate use of landmines and cluster munitions in countries in armed conflict and their effects in post-conflict situations. We would therefore encourage Member States to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions at the conference that will take place in Oslo in December.

Mexico believes it essential to combat the impunity of those who violate human rights and international humanitarian law as they continue to recruit and use children in armed conflict and commit other serious offences, such as the killing and maiming of children, sexual violations, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian assistance to children. In that respect, my country underscores the importance that those responsible for such crimes be brought to justice in national courts or international tribunals or even referred to the International Criminal Court for investigation and trial. We also support the idea that the Council should continue to adopt targeted sanctions against parties to conflicts that commit grave offences against children, in disregard of the recommendations of the Working Group and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

I note that Mexico condemns any act of sexual exploitation or abuse committed by United Nations personnel in which women and children are the main victims. In that regard, my country urges Member States to step up their efforts to implement the strategy of assistance and support to victims of such acts so that children can receive the understanding and support that they need.

Lastly, we stress our hope that the Security Council's call on the parties to conflict indicated in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) to formulate and implement tangible plans of action to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict will help to strengthen the overall framework of the Organization's action to protect children in armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to Mrs. Lila Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana (*spoke in French*): I wish to echo all previous speakers who have spoken on this essential issue since this morning in commending the Vietnamese presidency on its initiative for convening this meeting. I would also like to pay tribute to the outstanding work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and to the valuable contributions made to today's debate by Ms. Ann Veneman, Ms. Kathleen Hunt and Mr. Edmond Mulet.

Much has been said since we began the discussion this morning, and all representatives of African countries have stressed, with particular reference to Africa, the crucial importance of the issue of children in armed conflict. The policy of zero tolerance for the recruitment of child soldiers and the abuse and atrocities that children suffer has been advocated since the adoption of resolution 1659 (LXIV) by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity in 1996. Moreover, the provisions of that resolution have been taken up once again in various other key texts of the African Union. The commitment of the leaders of the African Union rests, above all, on the protection of children in armed conflicts, the appeal for assistance from the international community, the non-recruitment of children under 18 as soldiers, the education of and assistance to former child soldiers, regional training programmes for members of the armed forces and the establishment of peace corridors during armed conflicts for the protection of children and for humanitarian assistance.

(*spoke in English*)

Africa was the first region to adopt a comprehensive instrument on the rights of children, namely, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted in 1990, a year after the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The member States of the African Union also endorsed the African common position entitled Africa Fit for Children, which articulated priorities aimed at improving the lives of children, including the right to protection in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation. In 2007, a conference was organized in Egypt to adopt a call for accelerated action on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Africa Fit for Children 2008-2012. Under that document member States agreed to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. The plan of action focuses on the legislative and policy framework, the institutional framework, mobilizing and leveraging resources for Africa Fit for Children, and realizing the right to an education and to protection.

Other African Union organs and bodies, such as the Peace and Security Council, the Pan-African Parliament, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, as well as all regional economic communities, are actively engaged with respect to the question of children in armed conflict.

However, despite those efforts, pockets of resistance to the zero-tolerance policy of the African Union on the use and abuse of children in armed conflict can be observed in various conflict situations around the continent.

The question of children and armed conflict is certainly one that receives unanimous condemnation and entails our shared responsibility in order to strengthen responses for its total eradication. In that regard, I would like to make a few points.

First, in Africa and other parts of the world, illegal armed rebel groups are solely responsible for the use and abuse of children in armed conflict. Our response must thus include the strengthening of strategies towards specifically targeting them.

Secondly, the question of children in armed conflict is linked to the vulnerability and the weakening of families owing to poverty. It would therefore be crucial for the Security Council to lend its full support to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other global commitments to the eradication of poverty.

Thirdly, the impact of the involvement and abuse of children in armed conflict extends far beyond the person of the victim. It would thus be crucial to support the efforts of Governments and regional organizations, such as the African Union, which are first in the line of responsibility towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.

Fourthly, as provided in the Council's presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/6), the mobilization of necessary resources and access to them by parties would be crucial to facilitate the implementation of all recommendations by the Security Council and the international community as a whole.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the resolve of the African Union to work with the whole of the international community to ensure that the zero-tolerance policy towards the recruitment of child soldiers and the abuses to which they are subjected becomes a reality in Africa and all over the world.

The President: After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

> "The Security Council reiterates its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children and its determination to ensure respect for and implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) and all its previous resolutions on children and armed conflict, and the Statements of its President on 24 July 2006 (S/PRST/2006/33), 28 November 2006 (S/PRST/2006/48), and 12 February 2008 (S/PRST/2008/6), which provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as well as the provisions on children contained in other resolutions, including resolutions 1325 (2000), 1674 (2006) and 1820 (2008).
>
> "The Security Council reiterates its strong and equal condemnation of the continuing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict, while acknowledging that the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) has already generated progress, resulting in the

release and reintegration of children in their families and communities, through, inter alia, a more systematic dialogue between the United Nations country task forces and parties to the armed conflict on the implementation of time-bound action plans.

"The Security Council reaffirms the need for States parties to comply with their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, for armed groups distinct from the State to refrain from recruiting or using children in hostilities, and urges States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to those instruments.

"The Security Council welcomes the ongoing implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, in particular the efforts that have made possible the implementation of the mechanism in all situations listed in the annexes to the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757), and invites the Secretary-General, where applicable, to bring the mechanism to its full efficiency, in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council welcomes the sustained activity of its Working Group on children and armed conflict, as outlined inter alia in the latest report by its Chair (S/2008/455), and as the monitoring and reporting mechanism is being implemented in a growing number of situations of armed conflict, requests the Secretary-General to provide additional administrative support in order for the Working Group to continue to fully carry out its mandate in an effective manner.

"The Security Council invites its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to continue adopting conclusions providing clear guidance to the parties to armed conflict and relevant international actors on the concrete steps that need to be taken in order to respect their obligations under international law, in particular Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, and proposing effective recommendations based on timely, objective, accurate and reliable information, to the Council with a view to promoting the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through appropriate mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions. The Security Council welcomes the efforts by its Working Group to improve its working methods and encourages it to continue to do so with a view to further improving its transparency and efficiency.

"The Security Council commends the work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and underlines the importance of her country visits in facilitating better coordination among United Nations partners at the field level, promoting collaboration between the United Nations and Governments, enhancing dialogue with parties to conflicts in implementing applicable international law, including their obligations under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and thereby securing concrete child protection commitments.

"The Security Council also commends the work carried out by UNICEF, as well as other relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, within their respective mandates, the child protection advisers of peacekeeping operations and political missions in cooperation with national Governments and relevant civil society actors, in enhancing the activities of the United Nations Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting and promoting child protection at the field level, including through implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and following up on the relevant conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

"The Security Council recognizes the important role of education in armed conflict areas as a means to achieve the goal of halting and preventing recruitment and re-recruitment of children and calls upon all parties concerned to continue to ensure that all children associated with armed forces and groups, as well as issues related to children, are systematically included in every disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, with a particular emphasis on education.

"The Security Council reiterates the need for stronger focus by all parties concerned, including Governments and the donor community, on the long-term effects of armed conflict on children and the impediments to their full rehabilitation and reintegration into their families and communities, through, inter alia, addressing the need for providing appropriate health care, enhancing their exchange of information about programmes and best practices, and ensuring the availability of adequate resources, funding and technical assistance to support national strategies or action plans in the area of child protection and welfare, and community-based programmes, bearing in mind the Paris Principles to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment by Armed Forces or Groups, with a view to ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of their programmatic response to the release, rehabilitation and reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

"The Security Council looks forward to the next report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and reiterates its readiness to continue to review the relevant provisions of its resolutions on children and armed conflict, building on the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005), with a view to further enhancing the comprehensive framework of the protection of children in armed conflict."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2008/28.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.